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Initial report of Saudi Arabia due in 1998

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Preface

Recognizing the distinctive status of children in Islam, which the nation embraces as a creed, a constitution and an integrated way of life, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shows considerable concern for child welfare.

In this respect, Islam advocates concern for the welfare of the family, which constitutes the basic social unit that provides appropriate means conducive to a decent life and full realization of its primordial role in nurturing and preparing children for life.

It should be noted that, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, children represent the cornerstone and the major objective of the development process. Bearing this in mind, the State has mobilized all efforts to provide opportunities for all children to enjoy their fundamental rights and has provided educational services to guarantee the appropriate upbringing and development of the child within the family and community environment.

Moreover, several governmental and private institutions in the Kingdom play a pivotal role in the various domains of child welfare, including educational, health, social and recreational services and development of the child's faculties and skills.

In view of the Kingdom's desire to ensure the welfare and protection of children and prepare them for a decent life, its development plans include many programmes and projects implemented by the sectors concerned with child welfare.

The accession of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms the Kingdom's concern for children, who are tomorrow's men and the builders of the future. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989, pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/7 of 11 September 1995. The instrument of the Kingdom's accession to the Convention was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 26 January 1996 and the Convention entered into force on 25 February 1996.

In accordance with article 44, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the reports of the States parties on the measures adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention, within two years of the entry into force of the Convention and thereafter every five years, on 12 August 1996 the Cabinet decided that the Ministry of Education, in coordination with the government agencies represented in the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare, should prepare the report of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the measures adopted to give effect to the rights recognized in the Convention and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights.

In view of the importance of preparing the report in an appropriate manner that faithfully reflects the numerous services rendered by the Kingdom to children, in conformity with the reporting mechanisms adopted by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, a workshop was organized in coordination with the UNICEF Bureau in the Arab Gulf States, for the officials of the agencies concerned with child welfare in the Kingdom, on the appropriate procedure for the preparation of national reports.

The Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare was eager to ensure that the Kingdom's report would be indicative of the comprehensive care and consideration accorded to children, and documented by the regulations and procedures applied by the competent authorities. To this end, a Drafting Committee was formed of representatives of the following government agencies:

Ministry of Interior
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Information
Ministry of Planning
Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
General Presidency of Youth Welfare
General Presidency of Girls' Education

After the Drafting Committee had prepared the report, another committee was formed to review it and translate it into English.

When preparing the report, the Drafting Committee took into account the guidelines proposed by the United Nations for the preparation of national reports, and care was taken to ensure that it complied with the provisions of the Convention.

While submitting this report, the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare takes this opportunity to express gratitude to the representatives of the agencies concerned with child welfare in the Kingdom, who helped to prepare this report, a special word of thanks goes to the UNICEF Bureau for its cooperation with the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare.

Mohammed Ahmed Rasheed
Minister of Education
President of Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located at the south-western end of the Asian continent. It is bordered to the north by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait, to the south by the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, to the east by the Arabian Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and to the west by the Red Sea. It covers an area of approximately 2,250,000 km^2 (868,730 square miles).

2. Its territory occupies almost four fifths of the Arabian peninsula. This unique location, at the centre of the world, is one of its significant characteristics. It also has many other peculiarities, the most prominent of which are:

(i) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam to which Muslims throughout the world turn in prayer. It occupies a special place in Muslims' hearts as the guardian of Islam's sacred places: the Kaaba (House of God) at Makkah and the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad at al-Madinah.

(ii) It has adopted the Holy Koran and the Sunna (sayings and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) as its constitution.

(iii) Every year millions of Muslims, of all ages, come to Saudi Arabia to perform the ritual of Hajj (pilgrimage) and Umra (minor Hajj) and to visit the Mosque of the Prophet. In this regard, the State exerts tireless efforts to serve them and takes numerous comprehensive measures, including health, security, cultural and socio-economic measures, to ensure their safety.

3. The population of Saudi Arabia is 19,200,000, of whom about 25 per cent are expatriates living in its territory.

4. Since the issuance of the Royal Decree of 23 September 1932 unifying the Kingdom under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it has made consistent progress in all social, economic, political, cultural and administrative fields, in a balanced manner in keeping with the teachings of Islam and the requirements of modern development. The national development plans consider human resources development as their main objective and place great emphasis on education, training, ensuring the well-being of all segments of society, and furthering social stability to face the rapid social changes. To this end, the Kingdom has mobilized all efforts to achieve comprehensive development through the application of all the criteria of modernization, progress and constant amelioration of the standard of living and through the implementation of the consecutive five-year development plans, which started in 1970-1975. The Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000) is currently being implemented. The principal objectives of the five-year development plans are:

(i) To safeguard Islamic values by duly observing, disseminating and promoting the Shariah (the Islamic law);

equality for all its members, particularly children. It also emphasizes the importance of protecting children, safeguarding their right to life and preserving a healthy environment conducive to their sound development.

7. In this regard, Islam recommends the following measures: birth spacing, protection of children against infectious diseases, encouragement of breastfeeding, establishment of comprehensive systems for child-rearing based on freedom and independence, and obliging parents to cater for their full welfare and education and to inculcate in them the love of a decent life. Moreover, Islam pays particular attention to the personal hygiene and environmental health of children and to the development of their minds and bodies. Islam is concerned with the guardianship of orphans, with the welfare of children of unknown identity, though they are very few, and with the prohibition of their torture and maltreatment. It has laid down exemplary regulations for the protection of pregnant mothers from torture or inhuman treatment in the event of imprisonment, and has guaranteed a decent life for delinquent and disabled children.

8. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has derived its regulations concerning child welfare from these divinely revealed teachings of Islam which are in harmony with, and even surpass, the provisions of the Convention.

9. For greater clarity, we will cite some of the human rights recognized in Islamic law, which considers the observance of human rights to be an act of worship that entails ordained duties. In Islam man is more honoured than any other creatures (We have honoured the sons of Adam),[1] (We have indeed created man in the best of moulds).[2]

10. In his magnificent oration from Mount Arafat, the Prophet Muhammad, addressing an enormous throng of people, proclaimed the principles of human rights: (O people! Your God is one, and your ancestor is also one. You are all Adam's offspring and Adam was created from clay. The most noble of you in the eyes of God is the one who fears Him most. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab except in terms of piety).

11. In Islam, man's distinctive features are not inherited but acquired through piety and righteousness. In this way, Islam links human rights with faith and also with obedience to the commands of God. For example, in Islamic law justice is a mandatory obligation, even for enemies: (And let not others' hatred of you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice - Be just; that is next to piety).[3]

12. There is no crime except as defined by law: (Nor would We visit with our wrath until We had sent an apostle to give warning).[4] Likewise, no person can be convicted and punished unless he is proved guilty: (O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth).[5] And no one is held responsible for the offence of someone else: (No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another).[6]

13. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia abides by the teachings of Islam in the field of human rights. Therefore, the Basic System of Government shows due regard for these rights:

Article 26: "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic law."

Article 36: "The State shall ensure the security of all its citizens and residents living within its territory. No one shall be detained, imprisoned or restricted in his actions except as provided by law."

Article 37: "Homes are inviolable. They shall not be entered without permission from their owners, nor shall they be searched except in the circumstances specified by law."

Article 38: "Punishment shall be personal. There shall be no crime or punishment except as defined by a legal provision or regulation. No punishment shall be imposed except for acts committed subsequent to the entry into force of the legal provision governing them."

Article 8: "The system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, 'Shura' (consultation) and equality in accordance with Islamic law."

Article 43: "The 'Majlis' (Court of the King and that of the Crown Prince shall be open to all citizens and to anyone who may have a complaint or a grievance. Every individual shall have the right to communicate with public authorities regarding any matter of concern to him."

Article 46: "The judiciary is an independent authority. In the discharge of their duties, judges shall be subject to no authority other than that of Islamic law."

Article 47: "Citizens and residents of the Kingdom have an equal right to seek judicial remedy, the requisite procedures for which shall be prescribed by law."

14. To reaffirm its deep-rooted faith in human rights and dignity as prescribed in Islam, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified the Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, known as the Cairo Declaration, adopted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference on 4 August 1990.

15. The Basic System of Government in the Kingdom has prescribed all the measures needed to ensure the equitable and impartial administration of justice for the benefit of litigants. The judiciary is independent and subject to no authority other than that of Islamic law. Freedom of defence, pleading and discussion is guaranteed, provided that due respect is shown for human feelings.

16. It should be noted that the judiciary in the Kingdom shows due regard for human rights since it is important, in the interests of security, peace of mind and personal dignity, that everyone should feel that he is fully protected from injustice, that there are regulations to protect him and society and that any accusation made against him or others will not be taken at face value but will be duly investigated and verified.

17. Children in the Kingdom have their own judiciary, consistent with their ages, which guarantees their interest and applies the principle that a child is presumed innocent until proved guilty and that pardon should be given priority over punishment and counselling and guidance over reprimand.

18. In the light of the above, it is quite evident that Islamic law guarantees human rights in general and those of children in particular, as it provides them with care and protection, and facilitates adoption of the measures needed for that in conformity with article 41 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

III. THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND EDUCATION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

19. The education system in Saudi Arabia reaffirms the rights of the child in accordance with Islamic values and teachings which call for social solidarity and a secure and decent life for all individuals. They also indicate that it is the duty of the community, represented by the State and by public and private institutions, to take care of all members of society through application of the provisions of Islamic law, including zakat (alms tax), charity, expiation, social security for those unable to work and other forms of maintenance.

20. "Seeking knowledge" is viewed in Islam as mandatory for every Muslim, male and female. Islam calls for contemplation and reflection and prohibits intoxicants, drugs and anything that disables the mind and precludes sound thought or meditation.

21. Through its education system, the State is seeking to promote closer ties among members of society in general and among family members and relatives in particular. These social ties include the acceptance of invitations and advice, visiting the sick, exchanging visits, avoiding hurting others, the rights of parents over sons and daughters and vice versa, the rights of relatives, the rights of neighbours and conjugal rights. Likewise, education in Saudi Arabia emphasizes the principles of freedom of abode, personal freedom, justice, equality and fraternity in compliance with the words of God: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things".[7] Also the saying of the Prophet Muhammad "All of you are Adam's offspring and Adam was created of clay".

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

22. The general principles of the rights of the child can be observed in Saudi society in the following fields:

(a) Family care

Paying attention to mothers, increasing their awareness and eradicating their illiteracy;

Strengthening family ties and encouraging alternative and foster families to care for orphaned children and those in especially difficult circumstances;

Developing juvenile welfare institutions and programmes for delinquent children in a manner consistent with socio-economic changes.

(b) Family health

Providing primary health care, with special emphasis on maternal and child health care, including immunization against infectious diseases within the framework of the extended immunization programme;

Extending public awareness and health education programmes in the field of proper child nutrition, maternal and child health care, vaccination against epidemic and other diseases, combating infectious diseases, organizing regular health check-ups and expanding comprehensive immunization coverage for all children in order to achieve 100 per cent coverage by the year 2000;

Introducing country-wide comprehensive family health registration to monitor the health of all family members including children, and provide preventive and therapeutic care, as well as health education and rehabilitation and environmental health services under the supervision of medical specialists. In this way, the Kingdom has succeeded in significantly reducing the incidence of diarrhoea to less than 0 03 per 1,000 children, improving the weights of newborn infants and achieving a children's age-weight proportionality of 98 per cent.

(c) Child sociocultural welfare

Encouraging alternative and foster families to care for orphaned children and those in especially difficult circumstances;

Developing children's culture to enable the younger generation to become useful members of society;

Promoting the idea of establishing cultural development centres for children, providing them with scientific equipment and means to help children to practise their hobbies, and establishing children's libraries and theatres;

Allocating sections in public libraries to children and providing them with recently published children's books and magazines;

Increasing the production of cultural material for children, including publications, films and programmes;

Incorporating some cultural activities and programmes in school curricula;

Expanding social rehabilitation and surveillance centres and child welfare institutions throughout the Kingdom and developing the programmes and activities of juvenile welfare institutions;

Setting up social care centres to accommodate and care for children, particularly those with special needs;

Supporting social development and services centres and promoting their maternal and child programmes;

Establishing comprehensive rehabilitation centres for the disabled and day-care centres for special categories of disabled children;

Continuing to grant financial aid and social security allowances to families with disabled children until they reach the minimum age for admission to employment;

Increasing the number of juvenile courts to ensure the speedy settlement of disputes and safeguard the rights and well-being of children;

Continuing to render cultural, artistic, and recreational and sports services to enhance children's abilities, entertain them and enable them to benefit from their leisure time;

Discussing social issues in the information media in an interesting way that strengthens family cohesion and solidarity;

Exerting more efforts to develop children's, youth and women's information programmes in order to meet the need to upgrade education and culture, provide appropriate recreational activities for all ages and develop the spirit of patriotism and love of work.

(d) Education

Making primary education one of the strategic bases necessary for all children;

Enhancing school libraries, making them accessible to all and encouraging children to read and acquire knowledge;

Encouraging and caring for gifted children;

Providing education, free of charge, for all categories of children, including slightly and severely disabled children, in educational institutions appropriate to each category;

Using school curricula to achieve sociocultural development appropriate for child growth;

Encouraging children to read, study, acquire new knowledge and utilize their leisure time in a suitable manner; providing them with incentives to participate in the planning and implementation of these programmes, and awarding them prizes;

Developing health awareness among children;

Making special education available for children with special needs, integrating them, as far as possible, with their peers in ordinary schools, and providing the necessary facilities for this process;

Increasing the availability of talking libraries and audio books;

Incorporating maternal curricula in girls' education;

Supporting nursery and kindergarten programmes;

Supporting programmes to promote early detection and awareness of disabilities.

The education authorities also provide a number of other services including:

Early registration of students entering the primary stage;

A programme to steer students towards various fields of academic specialization at the secondary stage;

A student's educational and vocational guidance programme;

A programme to identify individual disparities between students and to cater for their welfare at school;

A programme to make intermediate and secondary level students aware of the harm caused by narcotic drugs;

A programme to make students aware of the dangers of smoking.

(e) Child welfare

23. There are a number of government agencies involved in the various aspects of child welfare in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare, supervised by a secretariat located in the Ministry of Education, was formed in 1979, the International Year of the Child, to coordinate the activities of these agencies. The Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare serves as a permanent body responsible for formulating the general policy on child-related needs and activities in the Kingdom developing these activities and coordinating the efforts of the various agencies concerned with children's affairs. The Commission is composed of:

(a) The Supreme Council for Childhood, headed by the Minister of Education, with 12 other members representing the government agencies concerned with child welfare.

(b) The Planning and Follow-Up Committee, headed by the Deputy Minister of Education for Cultural Affairs, with members representing all the agencies concerned with children in the Kingdom.

24. The Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare was restructured on 5 May 1997 and new members were appointed to its Supreme Council and its Planning and Follow-Up Committee with a view to revitalizing its activities.

The Supreme Council of the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare undertakes the following functions:

Formulation of a national strategy on child welfare to help the competent authorities in the Kingdom to promote health, educational, and social welfare;

Proposal and recommendation of programmes and projects relating to child welfare for implementation by the government agencies concerned;

Coordination of efforts of the government agencies concerned with children in order to achieve complementarity, avoid duplication and recommend action to be taken in each agency within its field of competence;

Encouragement of research and study centres in universities and other institutions to contribute in fields relevant to child welfare;

Monitoring of the activities of regional and international organizations concerned with children which might be of interest to the Kingdom.

The Planning and Follow-Up Committee undertakes the following functions:

Study of the minutes of meetings and recommendations of the Supreme Council and follow-up on their implementation;

Preparation of new programme and project proposals for submission to the Supreme Council;

Consideration of issues referred to it by the Supreme Council and preparation of the necessary studies and research on the topics required.

25. A secretariat, located in the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Education and composed mainly of specialists in child-related fields, has been established to plan and monitor the activities of the Commission, monitor the activities of the agencies concerned with child welfare and prepare reports and studies for submission to the Supreme Council and the Planning and Follow-Up Committee. It also includes a number of administrators to handle the secretariat's administrative affairs.

26. The secretariat undertakes the following functions:

Organization of relations between the government agencies and national bodies and institutions concerned with child welfare in the Kingdom;

Preparation of the meetings of the Supreme Council and the Planning and Follow-Up Committee;

Provision of information and data relating to child welfare and exchange of such information with all the agencies concerned;

Preparation of periodic reports on the activities of the Commission and monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations and resolutions of the Supreme Council and the Planning and Follow-Up Committee;

Monitoring of the activities of regional and international bodies and institutions concerned with child welfare which might be of interest to the Kingdom.

V. THE KINGDOM'S ACCESSION TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

27. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed, under the terms of Royal Decree No. M/7 of 11 September 1995, to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989, with reservations concerning all articles conflicting with the provisions of Islamic law. This is because the Kingdom pays considerable attention to child welfare and aims to strengthen its international cooperation through the United Nations and because the provisions set forth in this Convention are in conformity with the teachings of Islamic law concerning the need to fully respect the human rights of the child from the time when the child is an embryo in his or her mother's womb until he or she reaches the age of majority.

28. In this respect, the Kingdom fully appreciates the wisdom and flexibility with which this Convention was formulated in order to encourage accession thereto by most of the international community and, consequently, ensure that children all over the world enjoy the minimum rights proclaimed in the Convention in a manner consistent with the capacities and regulations of the States parties.

PART TWO. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

29. In the light of its decision to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Kingdom has taken the necessary measures to monitor the implementation of the Convention as follows:

(i) Announcement of the Kingdom's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child through local newspapers, radio and television;

(ii) Dissemination of the Convention to all government agencies concerned with children so that they can continue to upgrade their programmes relating to child welfare, monitor indicators of their achievements and rearrange their programmes to take account of the provisions of the Convention in such a way as to facilitate the monitoring of those indicators by the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare with a view to coordinating endeavours in the various educational, cultural, health, social and security fields;

(iii) Entrustment of the task of monitoring the implementation of the Convention to the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare at the Ministry of Education;

(iv) Restructuring of the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare in order to strengthen its role in the coordination of the government agencies concerned with children. The Supreme Council of the Commission, headed by the Minister of Education, also comprises representatives of the agencies concerned with children at Deputy-Minister level. A Planning and Follow-Up Committee, headed by the Deputy Minister of Education for Cultural Affairs and comprising representatives of the agencies represented in the Supreme Council, has also been established;

(v) Saudi schools have held children's festivals and organized sports, theatrical, scout and cultural activities to promote greater familiarity with the requirements for the implementation of the Convention. Many literary and cultural clubs in the Kingdom have discussed the provisions of the Convention in order to make them more widely known and local newspapers have devoted certain pages, to which children themselves as well as mothers and writers concerned with child welfare contribute, to a discussion of the rights of the child in order to create an appropriate sociocultural environment for the implementation of the Convention in a manner consistent with Islamic law;

(vi) A workshop was held, in collaboration with UNICEF, to discuss the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and how to prepare the reports of the States parties. Officials from government agencies and the private sector concerned with child welfare, as well as some representatives of Gulf States, attended for purposes of consultation and an exchange of experience;

(vii) The Kingdom has contributed $50,000 to the budget of the plan of action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child under the auspices of the United Nations. It will also be hosting one of the training courses to be held as part of the activities of the plan;

(viii) Pursuant to article 4 of the Convention regarding the legislative, administrative and other measures taken for the implementation of the rights recognized in the Convention in order to harmonize national law and policy with the provisions of the Convention, it should be noted that what is available to children in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is superior to what is prescribed in the Convention.

To this end, measures have been taken:

To continue providing comprehensive family health care through maternal and child health programmes, to introduce programmes for the early detection, before and after marriage, of hereditary diseases affecting both mother and baby and to provide nutrition, medicines and health counselling for all family members;

To continue implementing the child immunization programmes and combating infectious diseases;

To monitor the growth and development of children through proper childcare programmes;

To strengthen family ties so as to protect children from arbitrary punishment through comprehensive programmes supervised by security, educational, health and sociocultural institutions, with participation by specialists and members of society at all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation;

To continue encouraging private-sector participation in child development; to take measures to safeguard the best interests of the child; to encourage more charitable works and to develop them in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Convention and the provisions of Islamic law;

To continue offering material and moral aid to needy families in order to meet the essential requirements for their children's welfare;

To continue supporting day-care programmes for disabled children, reduce dependence on shelter programmes, extend educational programmes and develop the skills of family members to enable them to participate in the psychological and sociocultural welfare of disabled children;

To continue reviewing and developing the existing child protection systems;

To continue propagating the principles of orphan guardianship and alternative families for children of unknown identity, even though they are few in number, and ensuring the universal application of the regulations concerning the naming of such children in order to ensure their enjoyment of respect and a decent life, without discrimination, in society;

To continue developing the capacities of the agencies concerned with juvenile welfare so that they can apply the juvenile welfare regulations in an optimal manner that ensures the safety and the normal mental, physical and psychological development of juveniles;

To develop the regulations concerning working mothers in a manner that ensures the fulfilment of their duties as mothers;

To consider standardizing care of the disabled under a single umbrella in order to avoid duplication and guarantee equal opportunities for the disabled, as well as effective contribution by the public and private sectors to the objectives and strategies consistent with the requirements of society;

To continue supporting and promoting research on child culture and awareness through the information media and discussions at various family and social levels with a view to achieving a balanced culture for children;

To continue coordinating the efforts of public and private bodies concerned with maternal and child welfare, and regulating expenditure on social, health, educational and cultural programmes for comprehensive child welfare through various channels and centres in accordance with clearly defined regulations and activities;

To produce more children's magazines, periodicals, publications, and radio and television programmes to make the rights of the child widely known;

To continue establishing children's clubs, such as the scientific clubs at Riyadh and Jeddah, throughout the Kingdom;

To continue supporting cultural excursions and activities through the youth and student centres and sports clubs that have been established in all parts of the Kingdom.

PART THREE. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Definition of the child (art. 1)

30. Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is totally in harmony with Islamic law with regard to the definition of the child:

"A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

31. The legislation applicable in the Kingdom in respect of the definition of the child is as follows:

(i) From birth to 7 years of age, no responsibility or duty of any kind is imposed on the child. At this age, the parents or legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and guidance of the child, whom they accustom to good morals and teach some essential principles, which prepare him or her for the coming stage;

(ii) From 7 to 10 years of age, the child is considered a rational person and starts to learn and be trained in religious observances, dealing with others and bearing some duties and responsibilities without any liability;

(iii) From 10 to 15 years of age, the child shoulders some responsibility and the legal guardian provides guidance and discipline without harming the child. He is answerable, in an appropriate manner and in the presence of his legal guardian, for offences that he commits and his legal guardian is liable to make amends for his wrongdoing and has an obligation to take care of him. If punishment is

required it takes the form of guidance, reprimand or placement in a social surveillance centre. The child is disciplined only in such a way as to ensure his or her proper conduct, without harming the child;

(iv) From 15 to 18 years of age, the child is answerable, in respect of any wrongdoing, in an appropriate place and manner, in order to protect the child and safeguard his or her interests as an extension of the child's care and upbringing. In order to protect the child and others, any punishment that may be required takes the form of discipline, guidance, and admonishment. If necessary, the child is placed in a social rehabilitation centre, as an alternative environment, for an appropriate period of time in order to ensure an improvement in his or her conduct and behaviour.

32. A juvenile is defined, in the penal laws set forth in the Detention and Juvenile Homes Statues of 1975, as every human being below the age of 18 years. The regulations stipulate that a juvenile cannot be detained in a public prison but must be delivered to a surveillance centre.

33. In the social sphere, the regulations do not define a specific age for marriage, as Islamic law regulates this matter in a manner that ensures happiness for both spouses and prevents the countless social dangers inherent in delaying the age of marriage. In this context, it stipulates that a person wishing to marry must have the capacity therefor. This flexibility in Islamic law helps to close loopholes and safeguard the interests of both parties.

34. The minimum age for enrolment in the armed forces is 18 years, when recruits start training and do not normally participate in military operations until the training courses have been completed. It is noteworthy that military service is not compulsory in Saudi Arabia.

35. For purposes of the application of penal procedures to users of narcotic pills, the regulations raise the maximum age of juveniles to 20 years in certain cases.

36. The age of 18 years is defined as the minimum age for admission to employment in the public or private sectors. A child under 13 years of age is not allowed to work even with the consent of his legal guardian. In this regard, it should be noted that we very rarely find working children in the Kingdom under 13 years of age, except within the framework of their family and under the supervision of their legal guardian, usually in non-strenuous work such as helping fathers in their shops.

37. A child over 15 years of age has the right to plead before a court, receive legal or medical counselling and obtain an identity card under the Civil Status Regulations.

B. Non-discrimination (art. 2)

38. Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that "States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."

39. Article 2, paragraph 2 further stipulates that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members."

40. In this context, it should be noted that the System of Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopts two important principles:

(i) Justice, equality and non-discrimination between kin and strangers, and non-bias towards the strong at the expense of the weak ("God commands justice, the doing of good ... ."[8]). In the words of the Prophet: "By God, if my daughter Fatima were to steal, I would cut off her hand."

(ii) The application of Islamic law to all persons. Rights are guaranteed equally to all individuals irrespective of their race, sex or other considerations. The law is applicable to all without partiality and all the judicial, social and cultural systems are based on this principle. Moreover, the Kingdom shows due concern for children deprived of a family environment or afflicted with a disability with a view to ensuring their enjoyment of all their rights on an equal footing with other children.

41. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz, expounded these principles during his presentation of the Basic System of Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the following words:

> "There is no difference between the ruler and the ruled. All are equal before God's law and all are equal in their love of their homeland and their concern for its safety, unity, well-being and progress. The ruler has rights and duties and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is governed solely by God's law."

42. The articles of the Basic System of Government have also clarified those principles in detail. Article 26 stipulates that "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic law". Article 8 states that "The system of Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, 'Shura' (consultation) and equality in accordance with Islamic law." Article 47 recognizes that "Citizens and residents of the Kingdom have an equal right to seek judicial remedy."

43. The Basic System of Government elucidates the necessary measures for this; pursuant to article 43: "The 'Majlis' (court) of the King and that of the Crown Prince shall be open to all citizens and to anyone who may have a complaint or a grievance. Every individual shall have the right to communicate with public authorities regarding any matter of concern to him."

44. Likewise, the Holy Koran reaffirms these principles in various verses; for instance, "Let not others' hatred of you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety.",[9] "No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another."[10]

45. Saudi society, which is based on justice and equality, strongly rejects all forms of discrimination. It never discriminates between the strong and the weak, man, woman or child. All of them enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the regulations, based on Islamic law, which are applicable in the Kingdom without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of their colour, sex, ethnic origin, age or religion.

46. Equality is one of the basic principles applied by the Basic System of Government, which emphasizes that all individuals are equal in human dignity, before the law and in regard to reward, retribution and their public duties without discrimination of any kind. The judicial, administrative and penal regulations also emphasize these rights in everyday practice.

47. For example, juveniles who commit offences are treated equally, without any discrimination in regard to rights, obligations or penalties. Likewise, children who break the law are disciplined in accordance with the regulations, due regard being shown for their age, their situation, the place in which the offence was committed and the extent of the harm caused, regardless of their nationality or origin. This is consistent with article 2 of the Convention.

C. The best interests of the child (art. 3)

48. The Shariah-based laws applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia show considerable concern for the best interests of the child in the form of full welfare and respect. The child's interests are furthered by his or her parents' free choice of spouse and their obligation to respect the rights of the child to breastfeeding, custody, guardianship, maintenance and appropriate choice of a name. This means that the best interests of the child take precedence over any other consideration.

49. In this connection, the Basic System of Government guarantees full protection and care for the family and children, who constitute the cornerstones of Saudi society in which the need for family cohesion is emphasized. Within the framework of the best interests of the child, the Basic System of Government defines the minimum age for the child's admission to employment in the public or private sectors, prohibits the employment of children at an early age or in heavy or hazardous forms of work or occupations which do not ensure the self-respect and dignity of the child, defines maximum working hours, prohibits the employment of children at night and requires employers to provide an appropriate and safe working environment with every facility for rest and comfort, and to show due regard for the rights and duties or workers.

1. Child welfare before birth

50. The Islamic Shariah urges men, on marriage, to choose a pious wife whose maturity and intelligence will safeguard the home and turn it into a place full of love, tenderness and loyalty. A woman's beauty, noble birth or wealth should not be the main consideration; she should be religious so that her children will inherit her good morals and conduct. The Shariah also urges the parents of the prospective bride to properly choose a husband with good character who will take good care of his family. And Islam prefers non-consanguineous marriage since the children resulting therefrom are sounder in mind and body.

51. It is a recognized principle in Saudi society that persons marry the spouse of their own choosing and have an obligation to select an appropriate name for their child and to provide him or her with an education. In this respect, the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab said: "A father has an obligation to choose a good mother for his child, give him or her an appropriate name and teaches him or her the Holy Koran."

2. Love of children

52. Islam regards the birth of a child, male or female, as glad tidings for the father: "O Zakariyah! We give thee good news of a son. His name shall be Yahya."[11] God says: "Wealth and children are the adornment of this present life."[12] The Prophet compared the world of the child to paradise and added that children were like beautiful butterflies who made life happier and brighter. He said: "Were it not for suckling infants, bowing old men and grazing animals, your life would be torture."

3. The family and the Basic System of Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

53. Article 9 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that "The family is the nucleus of society." Article 10 further stipulates that "The State shall seek to strengthen family ties, safeguard family values and cater for the welfare of all family members, creating appropriate conditions for the development of their aptitudes and capabilities."

54. In accordance with the Islamic Shariah, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the family is based on four principles:

(i) The unity of man's origin. This essential concept can be found in the following Koranic verse: "It is He who hath produced you from a single person."[13]

(ii) Love and compassion among family members so that they can lead a decent life in full solidarity: "And among his signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and compassion between your hearts."[14] This love and compassion enables the spouses to share the burdens of life and consolidate the family in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

(iii) Social solidarity: "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the child to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months."[15] "And we have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in year twain was his weaning: (hear the command) show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) goal."[16]

(iv) Justice and Equality: "And women shall have rights corresponding to their obligations, according to what is equitable."[17]

4. The administration of juvenile justice and the best interests of the child

55. The juvenile laws applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia show special concern for the best interests of the child. They take into account the child's age and social status, protect the child from exploitation and danger, specify the age - from 7 to 18 years - at which children are answerable for their acts, and make provision for juvenile courts, presided over by special judges, which administer justice and fully safeguard children's rights in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act of 1975, which ensures that judicial proceedings against them are concluded, without delay, in an atmosphere far removed from that prevailing in adult courts and in a manner that takes their feelings into consideration, after a thorough study of their social situation and after taking every possible reform measure. Such proceedings are conducted in camera, in accordance with the regulations promulgated in 1969 which encourage the settlement of cases in the juvenile courts without placing children in social surveillance centres, admonishment, guidance, counselling and reprimand being preferred to institutional care which shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time when the child's good conduct cannot be ensured by delivery into the custody of his or her guardian for ongoing supervision. The regulations stipulate that no previous convictions can be entered in the child's record, even if he or she is a repeated offender. When institutional care is ordered, the child has the right to freely pursue his or her studies, to enjoy a comfortable atmosphere, including means of entertainment such as television, radio, a library, newspapers and magazines, to receive visits, to practise sports, to take part in cultural excursions and competitions, to practise hobbies and to voluntarily learn some crafts of his or her own choosing. The regulations also make provision for several programmes and activities to promote self-reliance, independent decision-making and the beneficial use of leisure time. All the child's requirements in regard to nutrition, health, safety and protection are met under the supervision of specialized social workers who visit the child from time to time and listen to his or her opinions and suggestions.

56. The regulations prohibit the subjection of children to any intimidation or pressure during investigation or the hearing of their statements. The child's feelings are taken into consideration and the investigators are not allowed to wear military uniform or handcuff the children, who are transported in civilian vehicles and treated in the most humane manner. Specialized judges are selected to hear their cases with a view to ensuring their reform and reintegration in family life in full dignity. Judges are encouraged to shorten the period of placement in surveillance institutions if the child's conduct improves or if he or she memorizes the Holy Koran and the child is allowed to attend examinations during the period of custody. When more than half of the sentence has been served, the remainder may be remitted and the child can benefit from the Royal Amnesty issued every year before the Id al-Fitr in order to celebrate the holiday with his or her family.

57. It is noteworthy that the Islamic law applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia never sentences persons below the age of majority to capital punishment.

5. Foster care and the best interests of the child

58. The Kingdom has a specialized Family and Child Welfare Department which caters for the welfare of children in need of alternative care, such as children of unknown parentage, the few children who are born out of wedlock, children deprived of the care of one or both parents or

relatives owing to death, separation of parents, ill-health of the mother or other reasons. Such children enjoy comprehensive care until they reach the age of majority, when the advantages of their remaining in social care are reviewed. Such care is provided by an alternative or foster family or by private foster care institutions supervised by the State.

6. The alternative family and the best interests of the child

59. Several conditions have been laid down for child fostering to ensure their proper protection and welfare. After being given an appropriate name, children of unknown parentage are placed in the custody of a foster family, consisting of a husband and wife, or a healthy woman, who must be free of diseases and socially, physically and psychologically fit and willing to take care of the child. There are also rules to ensure that children deprived of a family environment are cared for by social welfare institutions or alternative families which cater for their social and educational well-being and their physical, mental and psychological health, from birth until they reach the age of six years in social welfare institutions, when they are transferred to social education centres and model education institutions.

60. The State has established a special system for child welfare in an alternative family; the "*Kafala* of Islamic Law" (guardianship system) under which the child enjoys all the rights and duties of any other citizen. The State earmarks an annual budget consisting of millions of Saudi riyals in the form of financial aid and educational programmes supervised by social workers who monitor and advise all the institutions and families entrusted with the guardianship of orphans or children in a similar situation.

61. The State runs welfare programmes - under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - for minors in a manner consistent with their social and health status, irrespective of their sex, colour, religion or ethnic origin, throughout the Kingdom in institutions which cater for their social, health, educational, psychological and vocational welfare. They also ensure an alternative family environment through the provision of accommodation, meals, clothing and every facility to promote their well-being, including monthly allowances, practice of hobbies and instruction in useful crafts so that the children can become active members of society.

62. Many other programmes are implemented in the Kingdom, including social education centres for boys and girls; social, vocational and health rehabilitation services for the disabled; welfare programmes for crippled children; day-care programmes and the welfare programmes for normal and abnormal children which are run by 160 charitable associations, including 20 women's associations. These associations provide child welfare services through kindergarten, day-care and children's club programmes for normal children and centres for disabled boys and girls, residential care centres, orphan guardianship programmes and programmes to assist the families of disabled children in the case of abnormal children.

63. The Ministry of Justice, through its representatives in the juvenile courts and in coordination with specialized social workers, takes every measure to safeguard the rights of minor children in a manner consistent with their best interests. An ad hoc body known as the "Board of Investigation and Public Prosecution" has been established to monitor the observance of human rights in all penal procedures.

7. Labour and the best interests of the child

64. The employment of children under 13 years of age is prohibited by article 163 of the Labour Code promulgated in Royal Decree No. M/21 of 16 November 1969, in conformity with ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and the need for children to continue their education to the age of 18. The age of the child must be proved by a birth certificate or an official assessment by a doctor at the Ministry of Health. A certificate of physical fitness and parental consent are also required. Fulfilment of these requirements is noted in special records, which are inspected by the Labour Office.

65. Article 204 of the Labour Code prescribes the penalty for an employer who violates any provision of chapter 10 of the Code.

66. In 1978, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified International Labour Convention No. 29 of 1930 on forced labour as well as Convention No. 105 of 1957 on the abolition of forced labour. The provisions of these two conventions are applicable in the Kingdom. The Labour Code devotes a complete chapter (chapter 10) to prohibition of the employment of children and women so as to protect them from any work that is likely to be hazardous or harmful to their health. As for children over the age of 13 years, article 160 of the Labour Code prohibits their employment in hazardous or harmful work or occupations involving power-driven machinery or in mines, stone quarries and the like.

67. Article 161 of the Labour Code stipulates that children over the age of 13 years are not allowed to work at night. Article 162 limits their working hours to six hours a day and they are not permitted to work overtime (art. 152). Article 147 requires breaks for rest, prayer and meals of not less than half an hour during working hours. Children are not permitted to work for more than five consecutive hours (art. 148 of the Labour Code).

8. Social development programmes and activities and the best interests of the child

68. The State is endeavouring, through social service and development centres, to meet all the requirements for the child's development. In this respect, it provides health care, promotes the family environment and ensures appropriate education, including various educational services such as sports, cultural, social, scout, artistic and theatrical services and scientific activities, in addition to guidance, counselling and instruction.

69. Moreover, the State has taken measures to ensure that the child will grow free from diseases and psychological problems and with lofty morals in compliance with the sublime Islamic values and teachings. To this end, it has established kindergartens, children's summer clubs and scientific centres, which include practical models, for the large-scale scientific development in various fields, and public libraries, which lend books on various modern sciences and knowledge free of charge. Besides the foregoing services, municipalities pay great attention to public parks and playgrounds where children can practise popular and cultural activities. There are some social and cultural centres with halls for the holding of seminars, cultural meetings and theatrical and other activities. Moreover, there are youth welfare programmes designed to promote mental and physical training, create an integrated personality and provide an opportunity to spend leisure time in a constructive manner consistent with Islamic law. To

this end, religious, social, cultural, sports and training programmes have been formulated through youth clubs, summer camps, various training courses and cultural and sports competitions. The State has earmarked enormous independent budgets, as well as incentives and prizes, for these programmes.

9. Social security programmes and the best interests of the child

70. Every child has the right to benefit from social security, irrespective of his or her parents' status. To achieve the full realization of this right, the State established the social security system pursuant to Royal Decree No. 19 of 1962 which ensures that children, in particular, are cared for through the provision of several financial and social welfare benefits until they become self-reliant. Monthly allowances are granted to needy children and their families, and monthly and annually allowances are granted to orphaned or parentless children. Other financial assistance is granted to needy children irrespective of the situation of their families.

10. Respect for the views of the child, freedom of thought and the best interests of the child

71. The views of the child are taken into account when determining the main and subsidiary requirements for a decent life. In this respect, certain measures have been taken to ensure that children can participate freely in sports activities, cultural clubs and types of competitions appropriate to their ages.

72. Newspapers have special pages in which children can express their views freely and there are many magazines in which children can help to write articles, and manifest their talents and discuss their needs. There are also radio and television programmes in which children can hold discussions with other children or with the officials responsible for child welfare. The child's best interests are assured through participation in cultural associations, scientific clubs and youth and student centres which develop the personality of the child. The child's views regarding the shortcomings of the welfare services rendered, and ways to improve them are given full consideration. The child is also free to decide whether to remain with an alternative family. Also, children in various social welfare institutions take part in designing the programmes appropriate to their circumstances. Cultural clubs have been established to enable children to express their problems in the way they wish. Children also participate in the evaluation of school curricula and programmes for school activities in order to make them more consistent with their aspirations without prejudice to the basic objectives of the programmes.

11. Vocational education and the best interests of the child

73. The State has formulated numerous vocational training programmes with financial and academic incentives to encourage children to participate in all scientific and professional fields and to provide income-generating opportunities from which they can benefit in later life in accordance with their health and physical abilities. To this end, the State has established the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training and has designed programmes for post-secondary higher education and secondary and pre-secondary technical education.

74. There are 6 technical colleges, 36 commercial, industrial, agricultural and technical supervisors' institutes and 30 pre-secondary technical institutes, all of which contribute to the training of a qualified national workforce capable of meeting their own needs as well as those of their country. Furthermore, the State offers numerous short summer courses as a beneficial leisure activity, provides vocational guidance for all children and youth and organizes extra-curricular activities in furtherance of the best interests of the child.

12. The future and the best interests of the child

75. The State is still emphasizing its capital role in ensuring the best interests of the child by supporting and introducing several programmes and activities designed:

To help families to further the development and well-being of their members;

To promote the social, mental, physical, moral and spiritual development of the child by creating an appropriate family environment;

To provide more assistance and protection for children living in difficult circumstances;

To encourage families to participate in alternative family programmes;

To expand pre-school education through kindergartens, with special emphasis on the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential within the framework of Islamic values and teachings;

To continue emphasizing the right of the child to protection from economic exploitation and from anything that is likely to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development;

To adopt more measures to reform delinquent children without resorting to punishment, with special emphasis on rehabilitation and comprehensive guidance;

To make further endeavours to ensure that disabled children enjoy a decent life in conditions that facilitate their participation in community life;

To conduct further useful studies to ensure the best interests of the child.

To render more assistance to help families to participate in their children's well-being and culture.

13. Information and the best interests of the child

76. The Kingdom's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child reaffirms the special concern shown for children by all government agencies, including the Ministry of Information. In this connection, the Information Policy document of 1982 pays considerable attention to child welfare, as is evident from articles 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 18.

77. The officials in the Ministry of Information have realized the extent to which the articles of the Information Policy Document are in harmony with those of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are striving to give effect to those articles in a manner that complements the endeavours of the other agencies and is conducive to the full realization of the best interest of the child and society by:

Paying great attention to the news of the World Summit for Children, convened in 1990 by the General Assembly of the United Nations and attended by a number of world leaders. Saudi children presented their "Children's message to the Summit" to those leaders through channel 1 on Saudi television;

Making the provisions of the Convention, following its ratification, widely known by various means;

Developing audio-visual and written information material in accordance with the articles of the two documents. This is clearly evident from the following radio and television programmes:

(i) Programmes to make the child aware of his or her right to free of charge education (art. 28); such as "The children's forum" (TV), "Children's tales" (radio), "The family" (TV), "The children's magazine" (radio) and "Children's radio" (radio);

(ii) Programmes to make the children as well as their families conscious of their right to health care (art. 24); such as "The children's forum" (TV), "Our children are our hearts" (TV), "Your safety" (radio and TV), "The children's magazine" (radio) and "Children's radio" (radio);

(iii) Programmes emphasizing the right of the disabled child to special care (art. 23); such as "The children's forum" (TV), "Budding celebrities" (radio), "Will power makes heroes" (TV), "Stronger than despair" (radio) and "Hello, listeners" (radio);

(iv) Programmes emphasizing the rights of deprived orphans and juveniles (art. 20); such as "Sisters" (TV), "The family" (TV), "With you on the air" (TV), "Hello, listeners" (radio) and "Children's radio" (radio);

(v) Programmes making children and their families aware of their right of access to appropriate information (art. 17); such as "Open Sesame" (TV), "Entertaining competitions" (TV), "Children's tales" (radio), "Hassan's aeroplane" (media), "Little birds and branches" (radio), "Budding celebrities" (radio) and "Little Sibaweih" (radio);

(vi) Programmes discussing the child's right to an appropriate standard of living (article 27), such as "Sisters" (TV), "Questions and answers" (TV), "Important issues" (TV), "Hello, listeners" (radio), "Children's radio" (radio) and "The children's magazine" (radio);

(vii) Programmes allowing children to express their own views freely (arts. 12 and 13) through participation in the preparation of audio-visual programmes; such as "The children's forum" (TV), "Hello, listeners" (radio), "Children's tales" (radio), "The children's magazine" (radio) and "Children's radio" (radio);

(viii) Programmes laying emphasis on the right of children and their families to life, survival and development, and particularly on the State's commitment to guarantee this right before and after birth, as well as the right to a name and nationality and the right to enjoy these rights without discrimination (arts. 3, 6 and 7); such as "Sisters" (TV), "The family" (TV), "The children's forum" (TV), "Budding celebrities" (radio) and "The Kingdom in the eyes of the world" (TV).

(ix) Programmes to make children aware of their right to be protected from all forms of exploitation and maltreatment (art. 31); such as "An invitation to dialogue" (TV), "Educational horizons" (TV), "Social discourse" (TV) and "Hello, listeners" (radio);

(x) Programmes stressing the child's rights to be protected from the illicit use of narcotic drugs (art. 33); such as "Be careful, be safe!" (TV), "An event and a lesson" (TV) and "Hello, listeners" (radio);

(xi) Programmes stressing the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate freely in cultural life (arts. 28, 29 and 31); such as "Budding celebrities" (radio), "The children's forum" (TV), "Cultural competitions" (TV), "The children's magazine" (radio), "Children's radio" (radio) and "Little birds and branches" (radio);

The Ministry of Information encourages the production of cultural material relevant to the child, such as books, newspapers and magazines, which it buys in adequate quantities and distributes free of charge to children and young persons;

Presenting information and cultural material to children during their visits to information centres. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) monitors child-related issues, prepares reports on children's activities and disseminates them at the local, Arab and international levels;

Local newspapers and magazines devote appropriate space to children's and family issues and some children and young persons help to write cultural material. Moreover, some of them assume the responsibility for supervising many pages of these newspapers.

D. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

78. In keeping with the precepts of the Islamic Shariah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia guarantees the right of the child to life, survival and development. In this respect, it prohibits the killing of any human being in general and of children in particular. In the words of God: "Kill not your children on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for you and for them."[18] and "Take not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law."[19] God also says "I will create a vicegerent on earth."[20]

79. Being God's vicegerent on earth, man deserves to enjoy a decent life which ensures his dignity and well-being and to be protected from all harmful things that threaten his status. Accordingly, the Kingdom has taken appropriate measures to safeguard the right of all children to life, survival and development, through the provision of full security, nutrition and health services. Moreover, it is striving to ensure that solidarity and love among all members of society form the basis of such protection. It advocates wise and understanding treatment, and denounces enmity and hatred, among people through the application of justice and equality, without discrimination between male and female or between citizens and foreign residents, and helps every family to lead a decent life and care for its children in a spirit of compassion and affection.

80. The regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia to protect life, survival and development are as follows:

1. The Prohibition of Abortion Act

81. Article 24 of the Practice of Medicine and Dentistry Regulations, promulgated in Royal Decree No. M/3 of 2 October 1988, prohibit the abortion of a pregnant woman unless it is necessary in order to save her life. Under the terms of article 29 of the same Regulation, any physician who violates this prohibition is liable to a penalty.

2. Encouragement of breastfeeding

82. God says "The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years."[21] The healthy child programmes implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Health encourage breastfeeding through monitoring and public awareness activities. According to the 1995 report of the Ministry of Health, the percentage of mothers who practised breastfeeding during the first four months of their children's lives amounted to more than 95 per cent in most parts of the Kingdom.

3. The Basic System of Government and family care

83. Article 27 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that: "The State shall guarantee the rights of its citizens and their families in an emergency or in the event of sickness, disability or old age. Likewise, it shall support the social security system and encourage individuals and institutions to contribute to charitable works." Article 31 stipulates that: "The State shall show concern for public health and shall provide health care for every citizen." Article 46 affirms that: "The judiciary is an independent authority. In the discharge of their duties, judges shall be

subject to no authority other than that of Islamic law." Article 36 further affirms that: "The State shall ensure the security of all citizens and foreign residents in its territory. No one shall be detained, imprisoned or restricted in his actions except as provided by law."

84. Moreover, article 38 emphasizes that: "Punishment shall be personal. There shall be no crime or punishment except as defined by law or regulations and acts shall be punishable only after the entry into force of the legal provision governing them."

4. Social and health services

85. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provides preventive and therapeutic health and rehabilitation services for all its citizens, and for children in particular, and exerts diligent efforts to protect them from various diseases and make their lives happier and more comfortable. To this end, it provides medicines and vaccines, free of charge, against all infectious diseases through the social and health centres which implement social and maternal and child health-care programmes in residential areas, where parks and playgrounds are also established.

86. In this connection, the regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia stipulates that town planners must make provision for children's playgrounds covering an area of not less than 400 m^2 for every 200 housing units. The number of parks established by the State up to 1997 amounted to 3,060, covering an area of 52,600,000 m^2. Furthermore, the State organizes various forms of activities to make children's lives more comfortable and to ensure full protection and a decent life for all children.

E. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

87. The Kingdom respects the views of the child on all matters relevant to his or her life and gives due weight to such views in accordance with the child's age and maturity. Children have the right to be heard - either directly or through a representative who pleads on their behalf - in any judicial proceedings. Juvenile courts have been established in which juveniles are tried in camera in an appropriate atmosphere for the child to speak without being afraid, such trials being held in the surveillance centres in the presence of a social worker.

88. It is noteworthy that, under the regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia, the child has the right to freedom of expression either by writing in papers or participating in radio and television programmes, provided that, pursuant to article 39 of the Basic System of Government, such is not prejudicial to the dignity of others or to public morals.

89. Moreover, children can exercise their right to freedom of expression by participating in scientific discussions on matters affecting their lives or by taking part in numerous cultural activities such as children's theatre, poetry, oratory and story-telling at schools, institutes and sports, cultural and literary clubs and societies and through television, radio and journalism both in and out of school.

PART FOUR. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Name and nationality (art. 7)

90. Article 7 of the Saudi Nationality Act, adopted in the Cabinet's Resolution No. 4 of 23 September 1954, stipulates that: "A Saudi national is a person born in or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to a Saudi father or to a Saudi mother and a stateless father or a father of unknown nationality." Articles 8, 11, 12, 14, 18 and 19 (a) of the same Act specify the conditions for the acquisition and recovery of Saudi Arabian nationality.

91. Article 67 of the Civil Status Act (previously Citizenship Act) No. M/7 of 22 December 1986 stipulates that, on reaching the age of 15 years, every male Saudi citizen must apply to one of the civil status departments to obtain an identity card, the details of which are extracted from the central Civil Register.

92. Under article 32 of the Civil Status Act, all births inside the Kingdom, and all Saudi births abroad must be notified within the stipulated time limits.

93. Ministerial Ordinance No. 386 of 17 April 1988 specifies the conditions for the choice of names. Article 6 of this Ordinance stipulates that the names, comprising a minimum of four and a maximum of six with the words "son of" between the person's first name and the name of his father and between his father's name and that of his grandfather, etc., must be entered in the Civil Register. Article 11 of the Ordinance stipulates that names which are inconsistent with human dignity, contrary to Islamic law or undesirable cannot be registered. The State imposes confidentiality on the files of the civil registers.

94. The Saudi Nationality Act considers a child of unknown parents to be a Saudi national by virtue of birth within its territory even if his or her parents are unknown. Accordingly, he/she enjoys the same rights and privileges as Saudi citizens.

95. The child is registered at birth or, in the case of a foundling, on discovery. A birth notification certificate is issued, the child is given an appropriate name, his/her date of birth is entered on the certificate as well as the name of the mother if she is known, or a pseudonym if she is unknown, and the child is issued with a Saudi registration certificate, a birth certificate, a passport, and an identity card when he/she reaches 15 years of age.

96. It should be noted that, when naming the child, he/she should not bear the name of the foster family in order to ensure his/her dignity and rights, as well as those of the foster family. Any person who seeks to deprive a child of his/her identity or abandon him/her without lawful reason, is liable to the penalty prescribed by law.

B. Preservation of identity (art. 8)

97. The regulations applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations. The State protects human rights in accordance with Islamic law pursuant to article 26 of the Basic System of Government. It is not permissible, under the regulations, to deprive any citizen of Saudi

nationality except for a valid reason and under the terms of a Royal Decree pursuant to article 13 of the Saudi Nationality Act No. 4 of 22 September 1954. The Basic System of Government lays great emphasis on the importance of the family welfare, on strengthening the bonds which hold the family together, and on respect for the values on which Saudi society is based (arts. 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13).

C. Freedom of expression (art. 13)

98. The State shows great concern for the child's upbringing and education and development of his/her skills in a manner that ensures his/her effective participation in the integrated development of Saudi society. In this regard, the child, from the first day of school, is encouraged to exercise his/her right to freedom of expression through dialogue, which is considered to be an important basic educational tool to enhance the child's abilities. Expression is also taught in all schools as a basic subject in the early years of education.

99. Education officials hold meetings and forums with children at all stages in order to listen to their freely-expressed views and discuss their opinions regarding school curricula and teaching methods. Likewise, cultural, social, sports, artistic and scout activities are used to promote the students' ability to participate and take decisions on all matters affecting their lives. Children are given the opportunity to take part in planning the daily school programme and the school evaluation method. Numerous opportunities are provided for children and young persons to express their views on social, cultural and scientific development. They are encouraged to reject discord and violence and seek harmony, cohesion and mutual love and understanding in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah, as advocated in articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Basic System of Government. Schools and institutes, as well as sports, cultural and professional clubs, private cooperative associations, playgrounds, parks, summer and professional centres, etc. are used to develop skills, including free expression, in children, whose views are taken into account and who participate in decision-making in their programmes in a manner conducive to their welfare and the fulfilment of their aspirations.

100. It is evident, in the light of the foregoing, that freedom of opinion and expression, both oral and written, is fully guaranteed to the child in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in accordance with the appropriate regulations and, primarily, with the requirements of the best interests of the children themselves, without any undue influence or coercion. In this connection, article 39 of the Basic System of Government indicates the manner of participation in mass media activities.

D. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)

101. The State aims, through education, to instil the Islamic faith in the hearts of children, help them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and prepare them to become useful members of society and patriots who are proud of their country's history. In accordance with articles 29 and 30 of the Basic System of Government, the State fosters the sciences, arts and culture, encourages scientific research, preserves the Arab and Islamic heritage and contributes to Arab, Islamic and human civilization.

102. The State meets all the requirements for social and cultural development through educational institutions, cultural and scientific centres, literary and sports clubs, private and

public child welfare institutions, libraries and the mass media including radio, television, newspapers and magazines, etc. The ultimate objective is to develop children's skills and nurture their creative abilities within the framework of the development of Saudi society.

103. To this end, the State earmarks adequate budgetary allocations, including prizes and incentives for research and education.

104. Moreover, the State enters into agreements with other countries to promote cooperation in the development of scientific exchanges and appropriate means to facilitate the dissemination of information to children of all age groups from a variety of international sources, in order to promote their cultural and scientific well-being, with special emphasis on protection of the child from material injurious to his or her health or cultural and social well-being.

105. The activities undertaken in the Kingdom to ensure access to information include:

Libraries

106. In accordance with article 10 of the sixth strategic basis of the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan, the State must: "Lay great emphasis on libraries to accustom students to make use of such facilities", and in accordance with article 2 of the eighth strategic basis of the same Plan, the State must "allocate space in public libraries for children".

107. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made great progress in making all forms of written and audio-visual information, including information on the cultures of other peoples, available at schools, institutes, colleges, public libraries, talking libraries, clubs, associations and large parks. In this respect, it facilitates free access to information through borrowing or legal reproduction systems.

108. Moreover, the State encourages authors and thinkers to contribute by writing books for children in order to develop their abilities, broaden their horizons, acquaint them with the cultures and civilizations of other peoples and inculcate in them the love of useful information and knowledge conducive to good behaviour. The considerable interest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the dissemination of information and knowledge was confirmed when the Prince Sultan Charitable Institution published the International Arabic Encyclopaedia, the first encyclopaedia in the Arabic language, consisting of 30 volumes.

Lectures and cultural competitions for all ages

109. These are organized by a number of public and private institutions with a view to developing the talents of children and disseminating culture among them.

Scientific centres

110. The State is helping to make the younger generation aware of modern scientific discoveries through scientific centres, which provide information through watching, listening, writing entertaining games or easy-to-use modern technologies. Students have free access to such centres, where they can acquire knowledge in a cheerful and exciting atmosphere.

111. Likewise, some public parks provide an appropriate library where children can borrow books, tapes, films or computer diskettes.

Organization of educational excursions

112. Visits are organized to vital facilities in the country in order to acquaint children with their national history and heritage and strengthen their sense of identity.

Summer centres

113. These develop children's skills in a manner consistent with their age.

Charitable associations

114. Many of these associations organize programmes and activities to disseminate science and knowledge among children of all ages and contribute to their development.

Journalism

115. Many newspapers have children's sections written by a number of writers, scholars, mothers, educationalists and children themselves.

Academic prizes

116. Each region in the Kingdom awards an annual prize for academic excellence and the Governors of the regions offer donations and prizes to gifted students with a view to encouraging cultural, scientific and research activity in the Kingdom.

Training courses

117. Several schools, institutes, associations, sports and cultural clubs and vocational centres organized training courses to develop children's skills and promote cultural and scientific activity.

Student centres, youth hostels and sports clubs

118. These organize various cultural programmes, maintain libraries to provide written, recorded and audio information and host scientists and scholars to promote the cultural movement in the Kingdom.

E. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

119. Article 1 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its constitution is the Holy Koran and the Prophet's Sunna (the Prophet's sayings). Its language is Arabic ...".

120. Since Islamic law guarantees the right of children to protection, and as children normally follow their father's religion, parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare, development and protection of their children, especially in the light of their physical and mental immaturity.

121. Under article 7 (b) of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, "parents or legal guardians have the right to choose the form of upbringing they want for their children in a manner consistent with their interests and their future in the light of moral values and the regulations of Islamic law".

122. Although all Saudi citizens are Muslims, the State respects the right of non-Muslim residents to their religious beliefs.

F. Freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (art. 15)

123. The State encourages the foundation of charitable associations in accordance with the provisions set forth in the New Charitable Associations and Institutions Act No. 107 of 22 January 1990. It regulates the objectives and statutes in order to ensure that they achieve their goals and promote the public interest. Moreover, the State supports these associations and institutions, in accordance with Cabinet Resolution No. 610 of 25 May 1975, by providing monetary, technical, material and emergency aid to enable them to implement their programmes.

124. Saudi citizens also offer donations to these associations in accordance with the Collection of Charitable Donations Act No. 547 of 31 March 1976. These associations seek, under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to further socio-cultural interests and humanitarian goals without making a profit. It should be noted that membership of these charitable associations is voluntary.

125. Saudi society naturally encourages the establishment of children's associations in which the children themselves take part in organizing the meetings, planning their work, electing their members and chairmen, and formulating and evaluating their programmes in conformity with the best interests of the child, as in the case of charitable associations, literary clubs and sports federations.

126. The Kingdom has 160 charitable associations which have been founded by its citizens as an expression of their desire to serve their society in collaboration with the State.

127. The activities of these associations in the field of child welfare are divided into two categories: one for normal children and the other for disabled children. For normal children, they have programmes for kindergartens, day-care centres and children's clubs. In the case of disabled children, these associations accord high priority to their special needs through rehabilitation centres for disabled boys and girls, residential care centres, orphanages and the provision of assistance for the families of disabled children.

128. Several youth welfare programmes are designed to promote skills through the construction of schools and the organization of vocational training courses in languages, sewing, computer operation, typing, etc. It is noteworthy that all sections of society - urban and rural, male and female - participate in these associations.

G. Protection of privacy (art. 16)

129. Article 40 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that: "Telegraphic, postal, telephone and other forms of communication shall be confidential. They shall not be confiscated, delayed, inspected or overheard except as provided by law." Under article 37: "Homes shall be inviolable. They shall not be entered without the permission of their occupants, nor shall they be searched except in the circumstances specified by law."

130. Moreover, other regulations derived from the Islamic Shariah guarantee privacy and personal liberty, in which no one is permitted to interfere as long as they are not a cause of corruption detrimental to society, prejudicial to others or the subject of a complaint. It is a punishable offence for anyone to exploit, help, incite or encourage a child to commit a crime or an act of delinquency.

131. The law endeavours to safeguard the child's dignity, ensures that he or she is not exploited in any way and urges parents to protect their children and respect their feelings. Furthermore, all nurseries and child welfare institutions respect the child's dignity and feelings as a vulnerable human being who deserves protection, love, care and guidance and must not be subjected to maltreatment or exploitation.

H. The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))

132. Islamic law is characterized by its tolerance, forbearance, equality and justice. In keeping with these principles, article 38 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that: "That State shall ensure the security of all its citizens and foreign residents in its territory. No one shall be detained, imprisoned or restricted in his actions except as provided by law." Moreover, under the terms of Decree No. M/11 of 7 August 1997, the Kingdom acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1984.

133. Article 5 of the Detention and Imprisonment Act No. M/31 of 29 May 1978 stipulates that all prisons and places of detention must be subject to judicial, administrative, health and social inspection in accordance with the provisions of the implementing regulations.

134. In order to fully guarantee the humane treatment of convicted persons, article 13 of the Detention and Imprisonment Act stipulates that a pregnant prisoner or detainee must receive special treatment from the first signs of pregnancy until 40 days after delivery, in accordance with the provisions of the implementing regulations.

135. Article 14 of the same Act further stipulates that a pregnant prisoner or detainee must be transferred to a hospital when the time of her delivery approaches and must stay there until the physician permits her to leave the hospital, taking into account the need to protect her health as well as that of her child.

136. The Act allows the prisoner to engage freely in religious observance and provides every prison and detention centre with an Islamic almoner to dispense spiritual guidance, as well as a sociologist, a psychologist and facilities for education, culture and recreation.

137. Article 28 of the Act stipulates that no prisoner or detainee shall be subjected to any form of aggression and that a severe penalty shall be imposed on any official who commits an act of aggression against a prisoner or detainee.

138. The Kingdom observes the principle that a person is presumed innocent until proved guilty by a competent court, and that he has a right to defence at all stages of the proceedings. If this applies to adults, children in the Kingdom obviously enjoy even more humane and indulgent care and protection, as provided for in the Shariah-based Juvenile Justice Act under which special judges are appointed to hear cases involving juveniles, whose rights are fully guaranteed at all stages of the proceedings in accordance with the Act of 1975. It is noteworthy that juveniles are tried in special places (social surveillance centres) in accordance with the Act of 1969.

139. The regulations stipulate that the social circumstances of juveniles must be studied before their cases are heard, that reform measures must be taken in full confidentiality, and that no details or photographs of the hearing must be published. The regulations also stipulate that no juvenile should be placed in a social surveillance or remand centre unless social solutions such as guidance, admonishment, reprimand or parental undertakings have proved to be of no avail. Moreover, no previous convictions are entered in a juvenile's record, regardless of the number of times he may have offended. The aim is always to minimize the period of placement in a social care institution, from which the juvenile is released as soon as his conduct improves or he makes progress in academic achievement. Under the regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia, a juvenile delinquent is not compelled to confess to an offence that he may have committed; he is questioned, without pressure of any kind, in the presence of a social worker. Juveniles must be transported in ordinary vehicles with a civilian escort and must not be handcuffed. Verdicts against them must be reviewed by a judicial body (court of cassation) and they enjoy all their social rights, including visits by their relatives. They are provided with facilities for recreation, entertainment, education and vocational training in a manner conducive to their reform and self-reliance.

140. It is noteworthy that the Shariah-based regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia never impose capital punishment for offences committed by persons under the age of majority.

141. In fact, the regulations encourage the release and pardon of juvenile delinquents when their conduct improves, on the occasion of Islamic religious holidays or when they have memorized the Holy Koran. The judge has discretion to order the juvenile's release whenever he deems it appropriate.

PART FIVE. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

A. Parental guidance (art. 5)

142. Under Islamic Law, parents have a responsibility to preserve their child's life, ensure his or her well-being, development and proper upbringing and guidance and refrain from overburdening him or her. The Prophet Muhammad said: "Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock ... etc."

143. Articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Basic System of Government emphasize the importance of childcare and make full provision for the parents to fulfil their duty of guiding their child by ensuring employment for the parents, and providing preventive and therapeutic health services and educational and recreational services free of charge. In Islam, there are two types of guardianship: guardianship of person and guardianship of property. The former is more important for the child who, being young, needs care and proper guidance. Therefore, the guardian has an obligation to respect his ward's inalienable right in regard to upbringing, education, guidance and other matters affecting the child's person. This guardianship terminates when the child attains the age of majority. It should be noted that, if the guardian abuses his authority by, for example, endangering the child's life or physical or mental health, the State has the right to take legal action against him in accordance with the rules of Islamic law.

144. Islam also affirms the need to protect and endeavour to enhance the financial rights of the child until he or she attains the age of majority. God says: "And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength".[22]

B. Parental responsibilities (art. 18)

145. Article 5 of the objectives of the social, political and information services sector, as defined in chapter 11 of the Sixth Development Plan, stipulates that this sector shall: "Strengthen family ties, with particular emphasis on proper childcare, education and upbringing".

146. The State shows great concern for the family, the basic unit of Saudi society, as required by articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Basic System of Government.

147. Under the Shariah-based rules concerning the rights of the child, parents and legal guardians have a responsibility to ensure the happiness of the child and diligently respect the child's right to maintenance, kinship, breastfeeding, care, upbringing, and guardianship. Articles 7 and 8 of the Basic System of Government clearly state the Government is based on the Holy Koran, the Prophet's Sunna, justice, "shura" (consultation) and equality in compliance with Islamic law.

148. Articles 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 of the Basic System of Government define the rights and obligations of individuals and the State in such a way as to ensure a social environment in which the family can fulfil its role and duty of securing the happiness of its children.

149. Islamic law, through Koranic verses and the Prophet's sayings, defines the parents' duties, such as maintenance, kinship, breastfeeding, care and guardianship of person. Moreover, the State provides financial aid for the heads of needy families under the social security programmes.

150. The regulations protect children from parental exploitation or physical, moral or spiritual neglect. The State exerts consistent efforts to strengthen family ties, and especially the role of the mother, and to this end has formulated several socio-cultural and health programmes to help mothers to fulfil their duties towards their children in conformity with the child's educational and other everyday requirements. These efforts include the promotion of cooperation between the family, the school, institutes, colleges, cultural and sports clubs, charitable associations and health services centres in order to ensure comprehensive welfare.

151. The mass media are endeavouring to make parents more conscious of their vital role in regard to the cultural, health and educational development of their children in such a way as to preserve their full dignity without undue or inhuman pressure.

152. In this connection, the State renders the following services free of charge to the parents or legal guardians in order to help them to perform their duties and responsibilities:

Free education at all stages. In addition, the State pays allowances to students attending university, technical and vocational institutes and special education programmes;

Private and public social services centres;

Cultural and sports clubs;

Youth welfare centres, which provide opportunities for young persons to spend their leisure time in a manner conducive to the development of their abilities and their physical and socio-cultural welfare;

Social welfare, guidance and surveillance centres, care and rehabilitation centres and institutions for the crippled and disabled, which help needy families in the event of divorce, disability or death. These centres provide accommodation, meals and health, psychological, social, recreational, educational and cultural services for the children of these families;

Youth hostels of which young persons can avail themselves during their cultural, heritage and educational tours;

Libraries and public parks;

Welfare centres for orphans and the disabled, operated by the State and some charitable associations;

Day-care centres;

Language-teaching centres and kindergartens;

Vocational training centres;

Summer centres and camps;

Various information services;

Scientific research centres;

Special education institutes and programmes;

Health services and hospitals;

Kafala (guardianship) programmes for children and orphans;

Social security programmes and various forms of assistance;

Incentive programmes and prizes for students who excel in academic achievement and scientific research;

Internal and external scholarship programmes.

C. Separation from parents (art. 9)

153. The family is the natural environment for the child from birth until the age of majority. However, in spite of the efforts exerted to strengthen family ties, one of its basic constituents may be lost, thereby rendering its environment unfit for child rearing. In this case, separation is necessary in the best interests of the child. Whenever guardianship is withdrawn from parents due to illness, long imprisonment, death or unfitness to bring up children, the State makes appropriate arrangements for the welfare of children from 7 to 18 years of age through public or charitable social welfare institutions pursuant to Decree No. 611 of 25 May 1975. For children below seven years of age, the State has established welfare centres under the terms of Decree No. 156 of 20 February 1975, in addition to the centres operated by charitable associations.

154. In effect, due regard is shown for the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing in his or her family even if the child commits an offence, as long as it is not grave enough to warrant placement in a surveillance centre and separation from the family in the child's best interests. This is also the case when it is impossible to reform the child's behaviour through simple discipline, guidance, reprimand or delivery into the custody of the family under pledge of good upbringing, reform and guidance or through placement in a public sanatorium in the event of illness.

155. In some cases, the child is delivered into the custody of the guardian. If, due to illness or incapacity, the guardian is unable to ensure the child's reform, the child is delivered into the custody of a relative or any other trustworthy person of good repute who undertakes to bring up the child and has the desire and ability to do so. Likewise, it is permissible, under the

Shariah-based regulations to withdraw guardianship from one or both parents or the legal guardian if they are convicted of rape or indecent assault, imprisoned for a long term or ill-treat or pose a threat to the health, safety or morality of the child. In such a case, the judge may assign the guardianship to one of the child's relatives who meets the requisite conditions or places the child in a social welfare institution until a relative or trustworthy person capable of caring for the child is found or until the child reaches the age of 20.

156. Children under seven years of age whose best interests require separation from their parents, are placed in a welfare institution. The statutes of welfare institutions as well as prisons allow the child to stay with his or her mother if this is in the child's best interests. A child who is remanded in custody is permitted to receive regular family visits and is provided with every facility needed to ensure his or her reform, rehabilitation, education, safety and reintegration in normal life. Such children enjoy the same rights as other children and previous convictions are not entered in their record, regardless of the number of times they may have offended.

157. The persons in charge of welfare and surveillance centres take measures to maintain the child's links with his or her family. Children are separated from their families or guardians if the latter are found to be remiss in their duty or unduly harsh in their treatment (e.g. confinement of the child in an enclosed area) or it they are convicted of the crime of adultery, indecent assault, incitement of the child to debauchery or other forms of child exploitation.

158. Article 5/2 of the policies set forth in the Sixth Development Plan stipulates that the State shall endeavour to develop the activities and programmes of juvenile welfare institutions in a manner consistent with the successive social and economic changes. Article 6/1 of the same Plan further stipulates that the State shall continue setting up social-welfare centres to accommodate and care for orphaned children and children with special needs.

D. Family reunification (art. 10)

159. Articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Basic System of Government stress the need to consolidate family ties, to provide health, education, security, food, water and other vital services in all urban and rural parts of the Kingdom without compelling anyone to live in a specific place, to grant citizens as well as foreign residents the right to enter, leave and return to the country without any restriction except as provided for in the Travel and Immigration Regulations, which are consistent with their safety, security and other requirements. Moreover, foreign residents have the right to bring their families, in accordance with specific regulations, in order to enjoy an appropriate family environment.

160. The State ensures that all citizens, whether inside or outside the country, enjoy all the rights to which they are entitled through acquisition of Saudi nationality. The regulations guarantee family reunification in accordance with Islamic law, and oblige parents to assume their responsibilities, and children to fulfil their duties towards their parents. God says: "And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts)".[23] "And we have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him. And in years twain was his weaning".[24]

E. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, para. 4)

161. Under the Shariah-based regulations, the head of the family has an obligation to maintain his wife and children and, if he fails to maintain them, while capable of doing so, he is liable to the penalty prescribed by Islamic law.

162. The Social Welfare Institutions Act, promulgated in Decree No. 185 of 8 August 1967, specifies the conditions for the maintenance of orphaned children and other children who are no longer maintained by reason of their parents' or guardians' illness, criminal conviction or remissness, in order to prevent juvenile delinquency. Likewise, the State guarantees the provision of social assistance for needy families through social security programmes or through application of the regulations governing the *Kafala* of orphans and juveniles in accordance with the situation of the juvenile requiring assistance. Moreover, at the request of an incapacitated guardian, children can be placed in social education centres or included in social security or *kafala* programmes as required by the best interests of the child. In addition to accommodation, food, clothing and education, the State provides children placed in social welfare institutions with every facility for recreation, sports and rehabilitation until they reach 20 years of age and become self-reliant or until one of their relatives or another person meeting the requisite conditions undertakes to maintain them.

F. Children deprived of a family environment (art. 20)

163. The State caters for the full welfare of children deprived of a family environment through various programmes, such as: orphans' welfare programmes, social education centres, social security programmes and the orphans' *kafala* system; all these programmes give paramount consideration to the best interests of the child. Furthermore, many charitable associations run various health, social, educational, cultural and accommodation programmes including full guardianship in accordance with the stipulations of the Orphans' *Kafala* Statute.

164. The centres for the disabled provide comprehensive care for disabled children in accordance with their special circumstances, including accommodation, rehabilitation, treatment, education, guardianship, day care and other services in a manner conducive to the child's best interests, health and social development.

165. Besides these foregoing institutions, social welfare institutions accept children below seven years of age who are deprived of a family environment and ensure that they enjoy guardianship, welfare, education and protection programmes in accordance with their needs.

G. Adoption (art. 21)

166. The State applies the *Kafala* of Islamic Law, which secures the child's right to life in conditions that guarantee freedom and dignity, promote the child's development and enable the child to manifest his or her talents in the future.

167. The State has laid down, in compliance with Islamic law, the conditions governing *Kafala* and alternative families in a manner consistent with the best interests of the child as it requires that a woman or a family who wishes to assume a *Kafala* should be of good reputation

They award prizes and incentives for excellence in academic achievement and scientific research.

They establish social welfare institutions, take care of orphan and grant benefits to needy persons.

Through the reform programmes implemented at the surveillance centres, they rehabilitate juvenile delinquents and enable them to reintegrate in society and enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other citizens.

They assist sick and disabled persons, after recovery or rehabilitation, to participate in the development process.

They allow citizens to participate in the provision of all forms of social services in order to achieve comprehensive social solidarity in a manner conducive to mutual respect and cooperation among all sections of society without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of colour, religion, ethnic origin or financial status.

PART SIX. BASIC PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

170. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shows considerable concern for the health sector and provides health care free of charge to all citizens. In this connection, article 31 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that: "The State shall show concern for public health and shall provide health care for every citizen". Article 27 of the Basic System of Government affirms that: "The State shall guarantee the rights of its citizens and their families in an emergency or in the event of sickness, disability or old age. Likewise, it shall support the social security system and encourage individuals and institutions to contribute to charitable works". Article 32 of the Basic System further stipulates that: "The State shall endeavour to conserve, protect and develop the environment and prevent pollution".

171. To affirm the leading role of the State in the field of health and social welfare, paragraph 2 of the eighth strategic basis enshrined in the general objectives and strategic bases of the Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000) indicates that the State shall provide enhanced care for children in all fields and at all levels by:

Enlightening mothers about the various aspects of childcare and eradicating illiteracy among them;

Developing welfare programmes for juvenile delinquents;

Stressing the importance of maternal and child health care with a view to completing the coverage of child immunization against infectious diseases;

Allocating space for children in public libraries.

172. Paragraph (c) of article 11.1.5.1 in chapter 11 of the Sixth Development Plan, entitled "The objectives of the health services sector", requires the promotion of primary health-care programmes, particularly maternal and child programmes, and the achievement of full vaccination coverage of children against infectious diseases.

173. Paragraph 1 of article 11.1.5.2, entitled "Policies in the health services sectors", requires the prevention of communicable diseases, the organization of periodic health check-ups for children and the extension of immunization against infectious diseases to cover all children.

174. The Ministry of Health is the government agency with overall responsibility for preventive and therapeutic health-care services, rehabilitation and training activities, research and health education programmes. A number of government agencies also provide health-care services for their employees and their families, including: the Ministry of Defence and Aviation, the National Guard, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education, the General Presidency of Girls' Education, the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu and large corporations like the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco). The Saudi Red Crescent Society provides emergency medical services and assists pilgrims during the Hajj (pilgrimage) through its huge fleet of ambulances, with a view to rendering field first-aid services and transporting emergency cases to medical centres.

175. The Saudi universities provide health-care services for students and citizens and make considerable contributions to research and medical training. In addition, the private health sector and charitable associations play a key role in the field of health care and provide 23 per cent of all health services.

176. The Ministry of Health supervises the provision of preventive and therapeutic health and training services at the hospitals, primary health-care centres and medical institutes and colleges that have been established in all parts of the Kingdom.

177. The State approved the formation of hospital patients' friends committees and district health committees for the purpose of promoting closer links between the providers and beneficiaries of health services. The community is represented in each of these committees by a select group of male and female beneficiaries from all types of health services, who participate effectively in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the health programmes.

178. According to the Ministry of Health statistics published in 1996, there were 285 hospitals, comprising 41,916 beds, and 1,731 primary health-care centres distributed throughout the Kingdom.

A. Survival and development (art. 6, para. 2)

179. The health and social programmes, which are designed to ensure the survival and development of the child, seek to guarantee the child's protection and welfare before as well as after birth. These programmes show due regard for health education in compliance with Islamic teachings and encourage marriage to non-relatives so as to avoid hereditary diseases. God says, "Verily, we created man from a drop of mingled sperm".[25] Islamic law urges parents to

safeguard their children; "Kill not your children"[26], "I will create a vicegerent on earth".[27] The regulations applicable in the Kingdom encourage making medical examinations before marriage.

180. According to the official statistics for 1996, pregnancy check-up coverage amounted to 94 per cent, the proportion of deliveries by trained professionals in health institutions amounted to 92.2 per cent of all births, and post-natal care coverage amounted to 92 per cent.

181. The following are among the programmes that promote the survival of the child:

The "healthy child clinics" programme, which aims to ensure the early diagnosis of hereditary diseases and growth and nutrition problems among children. It also aims to ensure comprehensive monitoring of the general state of health of the children, protect them from diseases and epidemics and give advice and guidance to mothers concerning the proper health care of their children at all states of development;

The extended vaccination programme, which seeks to vaccinate all children against infectious and dangerous diseases and to totally eliminate such diseases;

The home-visit programmes for children and pregnant women;

Health education programmes;

Diarrhoea control programmes;

Environmental sanitation programmes and programmes to combat carriers and causes of diseases;

Child nutrition monitoring and education programmes, and programmes to provide safe drinking water, in collaboration with the competent authorities, and direct therapeutic services, including check-ups, examination guidance and counselling for all family members;

Programmes to control chronic diseases among children, such as hypertension, diabetes and psychological disorders;

Programmes to control asthma and acute respiratory infections among children.

B. Public health and health services (art. 24)

182. Health is a right of all citizens, guaranteed by the State pursuant to article 31 of the Basic System of Government. The State provides assistance and comprehensive care for all citizens in an emergency or in the event of sickness, disability or old age pursuant to article 27 of the Basic System of Government. The Ministry of Health supervises the provision and development of preventive and therapeutic health and rehabilitation services in collaboration with other government agencies which provide health-care services for their employees and their families.

183. The supervision of the health services provided by the private sector also lies within the competence of the Ministry of Health, in order to safeguard public health measures, achieve the overall health objectives, ensure the safety of citizens, and guarantee health services of the highest quality. The Ministry of Health also oversees the registration and issuance of licences for persons working in the health sector as well as those working in the field of the manufacture and importation of pharmaceuticals. In addition, the universities provide medical services for their staff, students and administrators and make valuable contributions to medical research and training.

184. The Ministry of Health acts through target-oriented plans which define its priorities. It has earmarked enormous budgets for the provision of the most modern medical equipment for diagnosis, treatment, the establishment of health facilities and their operation by the most qualified medical teams. It is also implementing several academic and training programmes in various fields of medicine, nursing, technology, sociology and psychology so as to meet the technical needs of the various branches of medicine. Furthermore, it provides medicines, vaccines, serums and means to diagnose and prevent diseases.

185. The health services in the Kingdom are designed to:

(i) Eliminate infectious and endemic diseases;

(ii) Promote maternal and child health programmes, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Girls' Education, in order to achieve the goals of school health;

(iii) Provide all members of society with easy access, at all times, to free diagnostic and therapeutic services and laboratory tests in populated areas;

(iv) Achieve comprehensive coverage of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation services in all towns, villages and hamlets through primary health-care centres, public hospitals and specialist hospitals which meet the highest standards of medical technology, including open-heart surgery, organ transplants, treatment of tumours, etc.; and also to conduct medical research to upgrade the standard of services and eliminate disease;

(v) Render health education services. Hospitals run by the Ministry of Health adopt the system of referral to specialists and consultants for patients who require specialized treatment;

(vi) Rectify erroneous concepts and beliefs regarding health, nutrition and medication through proper guidance, monitoring and specialized programmes;

(vii) Ensure environmental sanitation and provide safe drinking water in coordination with the competent authorities;

(viii) Extend immunization against serious infectious diseases;

(ix) Monitor chronic diseases;

(x) Provide psychological and mental health services;

(xi) Provide care services for the aged;

(xii) Provide dental services;

(xiii) Train medical personnel, broaden their experience and enhance their efficiency in all technical and administrative fields.

186. The family health programmes, which are mainly concerned with maternal and child health care, include a set of objectives, the foremost of which are:

(i) Reduction in mortality and morbidity rates among mothers, infants and children;

(ii) Enhancement of maternal health and pregnancy monitoring;

(iii) Early diagnosis of hereditary diseases and child growth and nutrition problems in order to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the normal development and protection of the child throughout his or her life;

(iv) Comprehensive health education concerning pre- and post-natal maternal and childcare;

(v) Conduct of research on family health.

The Operational Plan of the Ministry of Health within the Sixth Development Plan (1995 - 2000)

187. The operational plan of the Ministry of Health includes specific policies and objectives designed to promote child welfare; for instance: article 1/2 of the policies of the plan requires ongoing provision of the minimum primary health-care services, including the health register, control and prevention activities against communicable and parasitic diseases, maternal and child health care, health education, environmental sanitation and treatment by general practitioners.

The plan also specifies the following objectives:

To increase child immunization coverage by the end of the Plan as follows:

from 94 per cent to 97 per cent for diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and poliomyelitis;

from 90 per cent to 97 per cent for measles;

from 92 per cent to 95 per cent for hepatitis B;

from 94 per cent to 99 per cent for tuberculosis;

and to maintain the current 99 per cent rate of immunization against tuberculosis;

To reduce the incidence of diarrhoea per child from 3.8 to 2.0;

To reduce the child mortality rate from diarrhoea from 6 to 3 per 100,000 live births. It should be noted that the present rate achieved by the Kingdom is 1.06 per cent per 100,000 live births;

To increase the use of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) for children affected with diarrhoea from 72 per cent to 90 per cent;

To decrease the proportion of newborn infants whose weight is less than 2,500 grams from 6 per cent to 2 per cent;

To increase the percentage of children under five years of age whose weight is commensurate with their ages from 92.7 per cent to 98 per cent;

To raise the percentage of pregnant mothers receiving antenatal care by health professionals from 86.6 per cent to 97 per cent;

To increase the immunization coverage of pregnant mothers against tetanus from 63 per cent to 85 per cent;

To increase the percentage of deliveries by health professionals from 90 per cent to 95 per cent;

To increase the percentage of pregnant women receiving health care during delivery from 87 per cent to 95 per cent;

To increase the percentage of mothers who practise breastfeeding during the first four months after delivery from 93 per cent to 95 per cent.

188. The following are some health indicators from the Ministry of Health statistics for the year 1996:

Description	%
Crude birth rate per 1,000	35.2
Crude mortality rate per 1,000	7.6
Population growth rate	3.7
Life expectancy at birth	70 years
Infant mortality rate per 1,000	21
Under-five mortality rate per 1,000	31
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	17.6

Immunization coverage:

Description	%
Triple vaccine and polio (3 doses)	96
Measles vaccine	94
Tuberculosis vaccine	94
Hepatitis B vaccine	95
Triple virus vaccine (MMR)	91

Expenditure on health in Saudi riyals:

Description	Amount
Average per capita share of budget	SR 25 244
Per capita public health expenditure of Ministry of Health	SR 2 000
Proportion of budget spent on health	8-9%

Under-five morbidity rates from infectious diseases per 100,000 live births:

Description	%
Diphtheria	0.0
Pertussis (whooping cough)	0.31
Neonatal tetanus (per 1,000 live births)	0.06
Poliomyelitis	0.0
Measles	13.12
Tuberculosis	11.16
Mumps	12.30
German measles (rubella)	2.44

Diarrhoea control programmes:

Description	%
Availability of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT)	100
ORT utilization rate	93.5
Under-five mortality rate from diarrhoea per 100,000 live births	1.06

Maternal and childcare services:

Description	%
Antenatal care	94
Delivery in health institutions	92.2
Post-natal care	92

189. It should be noted that polio and diphtheria have been totally eliminated, while the morbidity rate from infectious diseases in the Kingdom is quite low. Likewise, malnutrition diseases among children have vanished except for obesity diseases which are now treated through Healthy Child Clinics and health education programmes for mothers.

190. Moreover, the State, seeking to promote child health, provides therapy and rehabilitation services for children who suffer from speech defects or psychological problems. It has also introduced specialized programmes to train health teams to render psychological health services for children under the supervision of qualified specialists at hospitals and health centres.

191. The School Health Units which are run by the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Girls' Education, provide school health services in a manner consistent with the inherent right to life, survival and development pursuant to article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and also provide therapeutic services as required by article 24 of the Convention, in coordination with the health programmes supervised by the Ministry of Health in order to avoid duplication and safeguard the best interests of the child.

192. The purpose of school health services is to:

Promote the healthy development of children of school age;

Monitor and prevent the spread of epidemic and contagious diseases;

Provide environmental sanitation at school through field visits by health teams and monitoring of playground injuries and child accidents;

Monitor school environmental protection inside classrooms, toilets and canteens;

Ensure full immunization against fatal diseases;

Train the school Red Crescent societies;

Provide health care for girls and prepare them to become mothers;

Supervise social, psychological and mental health programmes for students;

Implement programmes for the early diagnosis of hereditary diseases, such as visual and hearing handicaps, and dental hygiene;

Conduct medical examinations of new students, as well as periodic check-ups of all students, maintain a medical record for every student, provide appropriate treatment and refer emergency cases to the hospitals;

Promote health awareness of worldwide diseases, such as sexually transmittable diseases and AIDS, as well as oral and dental hygiene and the dangers of smoking and drugs;

Emphasize the importance of proper nutrition for students.

C. Disabled children (art. 23)

193. The incidence of disability resulting from pregnancy and natal and post-natal problems has dramatically decreased in the Kingdom, by the grace of God, as a result of the services rendered by the State to ensure a decent life and proper nutrition for Saudi families and their children, to provide comprehensive care for pregnant women and to extend the immunization coverage of children. The progress made in health care safeguards the lives of children born with severe disabilities due to hereditary and other factors. Accidents remain the principal cause of disability among children.

194. In accordance with article 27 of the Basic System of Government, the State guarantees the rights of its citizens and their families in an emergency or in the event of sickness, disability or old age. Likewise, it supports the social security system and encourages individuals and institutions to contribute to charitable works. Paragraph 3 of the eighth strategic basis of the Sixth Development Plan calls for greater concern for the disabled and the introduction of national programmes for their rehabilitation and welfare.

195. The special care provided for disabled children is supervised by a number of specialists in educational and rehabilitation institutions run by the Government or by private or charitable associations. In this regard, great emphasis is laid on the development of the residual capacities of physically or mentally disabled children through programmes, institutes and centres which provide medical, social, psychological and personal care, physiotherapy and medical rehabilitation services for children suffering from multiple and severe disabilities who cannot be rehabilitated within their families.

196. The specialized programmes for the disabled in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia include:

1. Welfare and rehabilitation services

Vocational rehabilitation programmes for males and females to enable them to acquire some vocational abilities consistent with their mental, motor or psychological disabilities. This is done either in vocational rehabilitation centres or at places of work, such as workshops or factories. Every trainee is paid a monthly stipend until he obtains a job and a financial subsidy of up to SR 50,000 is granted to a graduate who wishes to set up an enterprise of his own.

Social rehabilitation programmes are available at comprehensive rehabilitation centres for severely disabled children. They include accommodation, food and clothing services, medical, social and psychological welfare and physiotherapy. There are 16 such centres in various parts of the Kingdom.

Crippled children are cared for at specialized centres which cater for their social, health, psychological, cultural and recreational welfare through boarding and non-boarding sections.

Day-care centres serve severely disabled children, who return to their families in the evening.

Ongoing subsidies are granted to the parents of disabled children to help them to provide full care for their children. These subsidies amount, on average, to SR 200,000,000 per year.

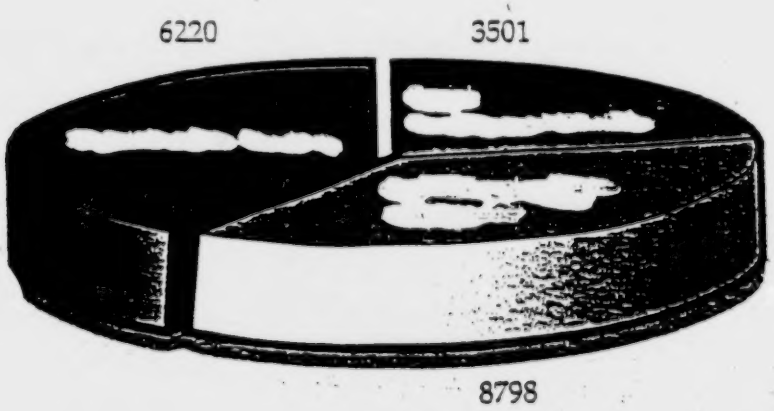
There are more than 20 centres for medical rehabilitation and prosthetics run by the Ministry of Health, charitable and private associations and various government agencies which provide health services for their employees. These centres render very sophisticated services, in accordance with the most modern methods of rehabilitation, which are free of charge except in the centres run by the private sector. There is also a centre to conduct research, upgrade rehabilitation services and develop the manufacture of prosthetics under the supervision of Saudi specialists. Citizens participate in the funding of these centres, which develop and produce many orthoses and prosthetics that are available free of charge to all who need them.

Voluntary and charitable services are rendered by charitable associations throughout the Kingdom which provide accommodation, education, training, medical care, physiotherapy and transport services for disabled persons, as well as assistance for their families. The Handicapped Children's Society in Riyadh is the most prominent of these specialized associations, which receive considerable support from the State.

A National Committee on Services for the Disabled, in which various government, private and charitable institutions participate, has been formed to coordinate and promote efforts to assist the disabled.

197. The following table shows the number of social welfare centres and institutions by type, as well as the number of beneficiaries, in the year 1997/1998

Type of institution		Number of centres and institutions	Number of beneficiaries
Social welfare, guidance and surveillance centres		20	-
Social education centres		14	
Social and vocational rehabilitation centres		21	
Social service centres and welfare institutions		29	
Social development committees		84	
Total		168	107 943
Charitable associations	Established by 1997/98	160	
	Foreseen by the end of the plan period	177	905 000
Cooperative associations	Established by 1997/98	161	
	Foreseen by the end of the plan period	167	250 000



2. Educational and pedagogical services

198. Special education was introduced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1959, when the first programme to teach the blind was established at Riyadh. Great progress was subsequently made in the field of education of the disabled and other special categories until the number of governmental and private institutes and programmes amounted to 160 in 1997, distributed throughout the Kingdom and supervised by the Ministry of Education and the General

Presidency of Girls' Education. These institutes provide services for children with visual, hearing, mental, physical and multiple disabilities, and other special categories such as children with learning difficulties, etc.

199. The Kingdom's public educational policy devotes a complete chapter to welfare of the disabled, in addition to a number of general sections.

200. Institutes and programmes run by the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Girls' Education provide not only education but also other free services, such as health, psychological and social welfare and accommodation, food and clothing for children who cannot enrol in programmes near their homes. These services are fully supervised in such a way as to ensure an integrated Islamic upbringing.

201. The programme of study in these institutes and programmes is similar to that in the general educational curricula, with a few modifications appropriate to the type of disability.

202. A monthly stipend, ranging from SR 300 to 450 according to the educational stage, is paid to all the aforesaid categories, both male and female, to encourage them to seek knowledge.

These categories are also provided with the following ancillary services free of charge:

(i) The talking library for the blind;

(ii) Hearing and speech centres;

(iii) Special education Braille printing presses;

(iv) Special equipment, appliances and aids appropriate to the needs of disabled children.

(v) Cultural and awareness programmes such as:

Preparation of radio programmes (Al-Noor Institutes for the Blind and Al-Amal Institutes for the Deaf);

Printing and distribution, free of charge, of the Holy Koran and some scientific and cultural publications in Braille inside and outside the Kingdom;

Preparation of educational, scientific and other informative pamphlets;

Integration of disabled children, with their normal peers, in cultural, artistic events and sports; scout camps and national festivals inside the Kingdom and abroad.

203. Special education teacher training has been organized by:

(i) Opening a special education department in King Saud University;

(ii) Recruiting qualified teachers who hold higher academic degrees in special education;

(iii) Encouraging teachers to attend the specialized courses available in the Kingdom and abroad;

(iv) Participating in specialized meetings, seminars and conferences convened in the Kingdom and abroad;

(v) Delegating a number of national specialists to pursue postgraduate studies in various types of disabilities;

(vi) Granting a monthly bonus, equivalent to 20-30 per cent of their salary, to encourage specialists to engage in this field;

(vii) Establishing the Prince Salman Centre for Disability Research within the framework of the projects of the Handicapped Children's Society.

204. At the present time, special attention is focused on certain developmental aspects, the most significant of which are:

(i) Application of methods to integrate the disabled with their normal peers through classes attached to general education schools, sources room programmes and the travelling teacher programme, in such a way as to ensure a less isolated educational environment in accordance with the nature and degree of the disability;

(ii) The need to make special education programmes available at all educational stages, starting from the kindergarten, with more flexibility in regard to age of admission and promotion from one stage to another;

(iii) Cooperation with regional and international organizations and specialized institutions with a view to exchanging experiences and upgrading the services in this field;

(iv) The need to focus on secondary-level vocational curricula for the deaf and the development of vocational skills through other programmes;

(v) Subscription to specialized federations and organizations such as the World Federations of the Blind and the Deaf.

3. Facilities and aids

205. The disabled are accorded facilities conducive to their dignity and well-being, such as:

50 per cent discount for the disabled and persons accompanying them on all travel tickets by land, by air or by sea;

Making orthoses and audio-visual aids available free of charge;

Allocating parking areas for the disabled on public roads, in parks and recreation areas and at government offices and airports in order to provide them with easier access thereto;

Granting paraplegics an allowance to convert their vehicles to manual control;

Giving the disabled an opportunity to participate in various sports and cultural competitions at the national and international levels;

Founding a federation for disabled sports with 10 training centres in 10 regions of the Kingdom;

Forming committees for the coordination of services for the disabled;

Providing employment opportunities;

Providing home care;

Customs exemption for their equipment;

Providing specialized libraries, such as the talking library, and audio books;

Governmental and charitable aid, as Muslim society is characterized by cooperation, solidarity and charitable works, including care of the disabled.

D. Social security and child-care services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18, para. 3)

206. The State shows considerable concern for child welfare through the Social Security Act No. 19 of 19 August 1962, which makes provision for financial aid, and social benefits including:

Special allowances for the children of needy families;

Pensions for orphaned children who have lost one or both parents, even those whose mothers work or whose fathers are unknown;

Financial aid for children who are found to be needy after a study of their social situation. The tenth paragraph of the eighth strategic basis of the Sixth Development Plan stipulates that the State shall: "Pay greater attention to social welfare programmes in all fields and shall promote private sector participation by encouraging the establishment of more private benevolent associations";

Provision of day-care services for children through social welfare centres for both boys and girls and charitable associations which endeavour to meet appropriate social and environmental standards in order to help children to participate more effectively in developing their society through:

Kindergarten programmes;

Children's summer clubs;

Day-care crèches;

Educational programmes;

Support of youth clubs;

Summer camps;

Courses in memorization of the Holy Koran, typewriting, computer operation, calligraphy, electricity and first aid;

Sports and cultural activities, exhibitions, folklore and heritage festivals;

Scientific clubs and museums;

Skill development and further training.

207. The role that the State is playing in regard to the welfare of the disabled is evident in the national development plans. For example, article 2-14 of the policies of the Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000) calls for endeavours: "To improve educational services for the disabled so as to include persons with defective vision, hearing or speech". Likewise, article 2-15 of the same plan calls for the dissemination of specialized library services, like talking libraries and audio books. Article 8-2 requires cooperation with the competent authorities in the field of the early diagnosis of disability, as well as public awareness of the best ways to avoid it. Slightly disabled children should be enrolled at regular schools while severely disabled children should be referred to specialized institutions (article 8-4). Moreover, article 2-10 stipulates that kindergarten and nursery programmes should be supported, expanded and disseminated throughout the Kingdom.

E. Standard of living (art. 27, paras. 1-3)

208. The average annual income of the Saudi citizen is SR 25,244 according to the Ministry of Finance statistics for the year 1996. However, the State provides a range of health, social and

educational services free of charge to raise the standard of living and accelerate the pace of socio-economic development for the benefit of individuals and families in conformity with the programmes designed to improve family income levels, such as:

Social security programmes;

Vocational training programmes for various crafts and support for the establishment of individual enterprises through assistance and loans;

Educational and health services for all ages. Moreover, the State pays monthly stipends to students at some educational stages and offers incentives for the gifted students;

Provision of housing through Real Estate Development Funds by offering loans for the construction of appropriate dwellings, constructing houses and distributing them to families or granting land free of charge for housing, agricultural and industrial purposes. By 1996, 1,400,000 plots of residential land had been granted to Saudi citizens;

Support for the investment projects of farmers and entrepreneurs and for the establishment of factories and hospitals and real estate investment projects;

Support for cooperative and charitable associations and social development projects;

Orphan *kafala* and marriage and widow's allowances programmes through the State social services and charitable associations;

The Social and Real Estate Credit Bank.

209. It is easy to see that all these programmes are closely related to the objectives of raising children's standard of living, ensuring a better future for them, granting them an opportunity for effective participation in various fields of development and assisting parents, especially those who suffer from a disability or disease.

210. Furthermore, articles 20, 21 and 22 of the Basic System of Government affirms that the State shall impose fees only on an equitable basis and when the need arises; Zakat (alms tax) shall be levied and disbursed for its legally specified purposes and economic and social development shall be promoted in accordance with a methodical and equitable plan.

PART SEVEN. EDUCATION, TRAINING, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

A. Education, including vocational training and guidance (art. 28), and objectives of education (art. 29, para. 1 (a) and (b))

211. A Higher Council oversees education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and lays down the educational policies and objectives. These policies are implemented by the following government agencies:

The Ministry of Education, which is responsible for male education up to the pre-university level, in addition to teacher training in specialized colleges;

The General Presidency of Girls' Education is responsible for female education, in addition to the supervision of some intermediate and university colleges;

Technical, vocational, health, military and schools institutes and colleges, which are run by the sectors concerned;

The Ministry of Higher Education, which supervises university education.

212. Article 30 of the Basic System of Government stipulates that the State shall provide public education and shall commit itself to the eradication of illiteracy. Likewise, article 29 affirms that the State shall foster the sciences, arts and culture, encourage scientific research, preserve the Arab and Islamic heritage and contribute to Arab, Islamic and human civilization. Moreover, article 13 stipulates that the aim of education is to inculcate the Islamic faith in the young generation and develop their knowledge and skills so that they can become useful members of society who love their homeland and take pride in its history.

213. It should be noted that schools (for boys and girls) at all stages (elementary, intermediate and secondary) are available in all towns, villages and hamlets throughout the Kingdom. More than 4 million pupils (male and female) are enrolled in basic education in the Kingdom. A study conducted in 1993 indicated that the academic success rate in the Kingdom was 84 per cent, the drop-out rate was 10 per cent and the percentage of students completing basic education was 92 per cent. Over the past years, that study noted a remarkable development in academic success and an impressive reduction in failure and drop-out rates.

214. The following two tables show the number of schools, classes, students and teachers and government expenditure on boys' and girls' education over the last five years 1993-1998.

Number of schools, classes, students and teachers (male/female) in general education, including kindergartens, in the years 1992/93-1997/98

School year	Schools	Classes	Students	Male and female teachers	Average number of students per school	Average number of students per class	Average number o students per teache
1992/93	15 208	127 148	2 923 341	202 096	192	23	14
1993/94	16 649	137 745	3 129 176	221 486	189	23	14
1994/95	17 808	147 560	3 356 273	243 611	188	23	14
1995/96	18 263	155 221	3 520 836	264 737	193	23	13
1996/97	19 264	162 991	3 717 882	281 650	193	23	13
1997/98	20 069	168 834	3 841 741	299 068	191	23	13

Average annual cost per male/female student (except for University education) in the years 1993/94-1997/98

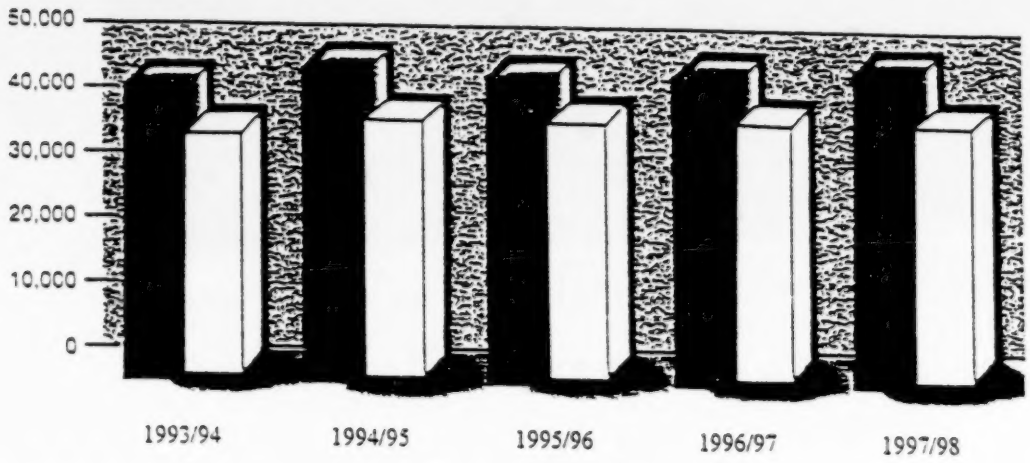
Year	Student cost (male/female)
1993/94	7 983
1994/95	7 072
1995/96	6 248
1996/97	5 951
1997/98	9 223

1. Stages of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Kindergartens

215. Article 117 of "The Educational Policy" stipulates that the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Girls' Education shall establish kindergartens because the State encourages nurseries and kindergartens in order to raise the educational standard in the country and safeguard the rights of the child. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs shall establish kindergartens in social welfare centres and institutions and in private, cooperative and charitable associations.

Evolution in the number of children at kindergartens over the last five years



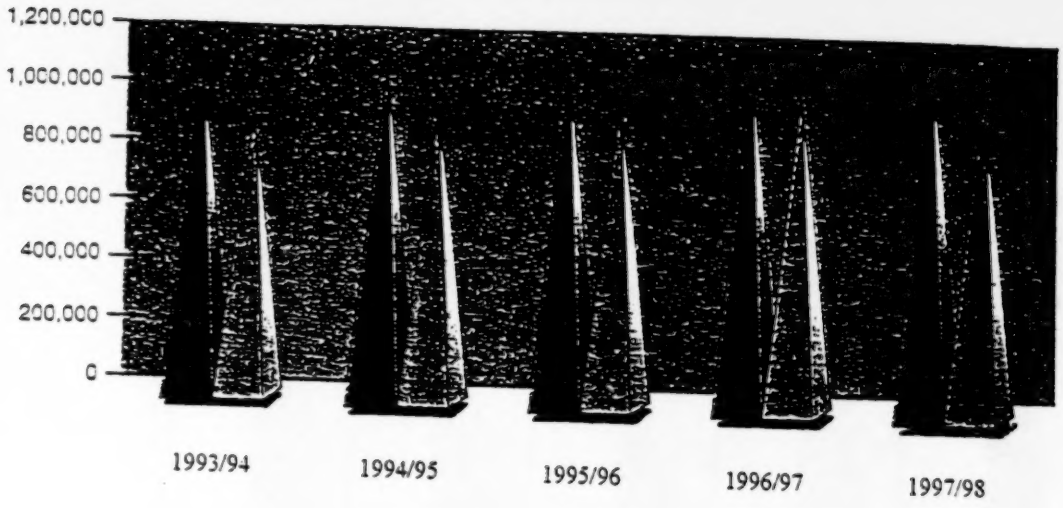
School year	Male	Female
1993/94	43 149	36 462
1994/95	46 040	38 905
1995/96	44 796	38 853
1996/97	45 487	38 896
1997/98	46 567	38 917

■ Male
□ Female

Elementary stage

216. In accordance with chapter 2 of the Educational Policy Document, the period of schooling at the elementary stage is six years and is available to all children of school age.

Evolution in the number of male and female students at the elementary stage over the last five years



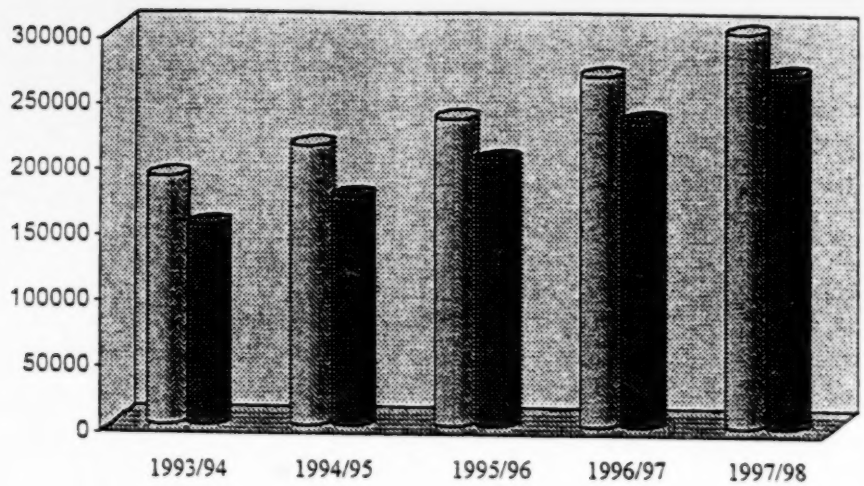
School year	Male	Female
1993/94	1 074 883	950 998
1994/95	1 117 655	997 081
1995/96	1 135 545	1 033 092
1996/97	1 178 596	1 069 526
1997/98	1 174 411	1 081 774

▪ Male
▫ Female

Secondary stage

218. The schooling period at this stage is three years and is available to students who successfully complete the intermediate stage or graduates of religious, agricultural, vocational and health institutes. There are four majors at the secondary stage: Arabic and Religious Sciences, Administrative and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technological Sciences.

Evolution in the number of male and female students at the secondary stage over the last five years



School year	Male	Female
1993/94	188 537	151 949
1994/95	212 138	173 615
1995/96	232 882	202 016
1996/97	265 689	232 168
1997/98	299 208	267 519

Religious, commercial, industrial, health and other institutes

219. There are also several types of institutes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which are supervised by the relevant government agencies, such as religious institutes run by Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University; commercial, industrial and agricultural institutes and the Telecommunication College, which are run and supervised by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training; health institutes which are supervised by the Ministry of Health; and the Post Institute which is supervised by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telecommunications.

220. These institutes play an essential role in training intermediate personnel for the various service sectors. Some of these government agencies have developed training in such institutes and upgraded them to colleges; such as the health colleges which train the skilled workforce, including nursing staff, radiologists, laboratory technicians, etc. There are also several private institutes supervised by the private sector in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Vocational education centres

221. Technical and vocational education centres aim to train a skilled Saudi workforce. These institutes accept students over 15 years of age. Students enrolled in all secondary-level technical education and vocational training programmes receive a monthly stipend throughout the duration of their studies, as well as transportation, food and accommodation (for students living away from home), medical care and cash incentives after graduation and during the first year of employment.

Higher education

222. The State provides higher education free of charge at seven universities in various parts of the Kingdom at which students, both male and female, receive monthly stipends. The various colleges teach all the theoretical and applied sciences. These universities award Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degrees. It should be noted that the academic standard of the graduates of Saudi universities is comparable to that of the graduates of the most highly reputed international universities.

223. In addition to their basic educational and scientific functions, the Saudi universities contribute to social work and scientific research. There are also some colleges that are not affiliated to universities, such as health colleges, teacher training colleges, military and security colleges, marine science colleges and higher institutes, all of which seek to develop youth and society so that all citizens can lead a useful life.

224. The higher educational institutions in the Kingdom have links of cooperation with eminent international universities.

2. Education and the best interests of the child

225. Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is concerned with behavioural, cognitive, moral, spiritual and skill-related aspects and, therefore, offers comprehensive programmes and school activities and enables children of all social classes and intellectual capacities to make good use of their leisure time without discrimination of any kind. The following are examples of the objectives of education in the Kingdom:

Elementary stage

226. The aim of elementary education is: to develop the Islamic faith in the minds of children, provide them with a comprehensive moral and intellectual education shaped by Islamic values, teach students Islamic prayers, virtues and good conduct, develop children's basic skills, especially in language, arithmetic and physical education, further children's general knowledge in all subjects, develop children's aesthetic sense and imaginative thinking, develop children's understanding of the rights and duties of citizenship, instil love of learning and the value of work and train children to make constructive use of their leisure time.

Intermediate stage

227. In addition to the foregoing objectives of the elementary stage, the aim of the intermediate stage is to encourage students to seek knowledge, accustom them to reflection and scientific reasoning, develop their social life and instil interest in educational activities as a means to achieve self-fulfilment, develop their skills, discover their talents and cement their friendships.

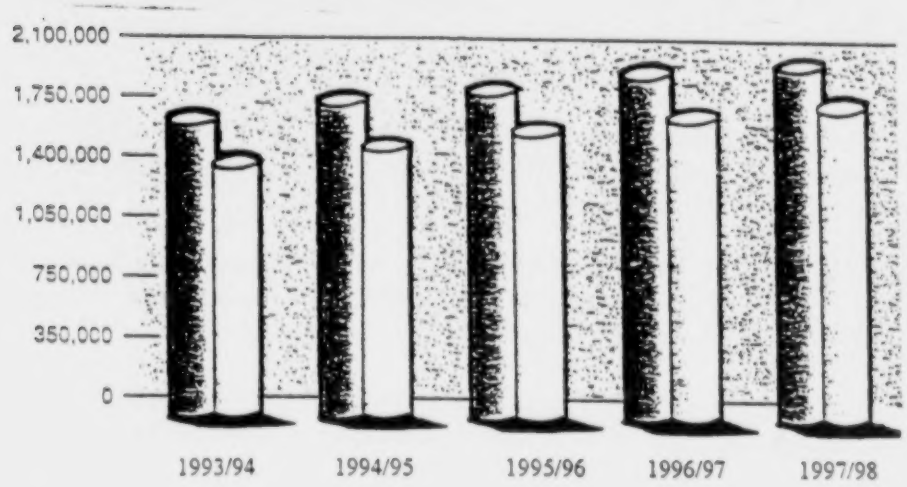
Secondary stage

228. This stage aims to consolidate the student's devotion to the one God, to the homeland and to the Islamic nation and develop the student's scientific thinking, spirit of research, systematic analysis and sound academic methods.

229. The State has reaffirmed its capital role, as well as its educational policy, in the strategies of the five-year development plans. The Sixth Development Plan states as follows:

> Article 1 of the sixth strategic basis states that "Elementary education is mandatory for all boys and girls";
>
> Article 10 of the sixth strategic basis requires "great emphasis to be placed on libraries in order to encourage and accustom students to make use of such facilities through reading and to acquire general knowledge";
>
> Article 11 of the sixth strategic basis calls for "more attention to be paid to extra-curricular activities at all levels of education".

Evolution in the number of male and female students in kindergarten and general education over the last five years



School year	Male	Female
1993/94	1 696 597	1 442 579
1994/95	1 809 906	1 546 367
1995/96	1 875 314	1 645 518
1996/97	1 982 734	1 735 148
1997/98	2 036 612	1 805 129

■ Male
□ Female

3. Operational policies of the Ministry of Education

230. The operational policies of the Ministry of Education contain the following articles:

Article 1/2 seeks to reduce failure and drop-out rates by diagnosing the reasons for the low learning achievement of students, providing them with appropriate assistance and guidance, avoiding repetition of the year as far as possible by exerting additional efforts with such students, and preparing special programmes for gifted students.

Article 1/6 stipulates that slightly disabled children should attend regular schools, while severely disabled children should be directed to specialized institutions.

Article 2/3 advocates the development of school curricula in a manner consistent with the social and cultural needs of the students and with their mental development at all levels of education.

Article 2/8 encourages reading and visits to school and public libraries in order to make students accustomed to educational research and discovery during their leisure time, for which competitions are organized and prizes are awarded.

Article 2/10 advocates the inculcation of health awareness in students, the teacher being the example to be followed in this respect and training the student to use means of preventive first aid in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Health.

Article 2/11 states that primary health care should be available to all students, either through the provision of health supervisors or through hospitals and centres of the Ministry of Health in regions where health supervisors are not available.

Article 2/12 calls for increased coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the government agencies responsible for other aspects of the development of youth.

Article 2/14 calls for the development of educational services for the disabled in order to include persons with visual, hearing and speech defects.

Article 2/15 advocates the wider dissemination of specialized library services, such as talking libraries and audio books.

Article 3/2 calls for commitment to the minimum conditions to be met by schools in order to be fit for the educational process, such as basic facilities, safety requirements, furniture, equipment, teaching aids and sanitation facilities. The fulfilment of these conditions should be ascertained in all schools in the Kingdom, including private schools.

4. The policies of the General Presidency of Girls' Education

231. The operational policies of the General Presidency of Girls' Education include the following articles:

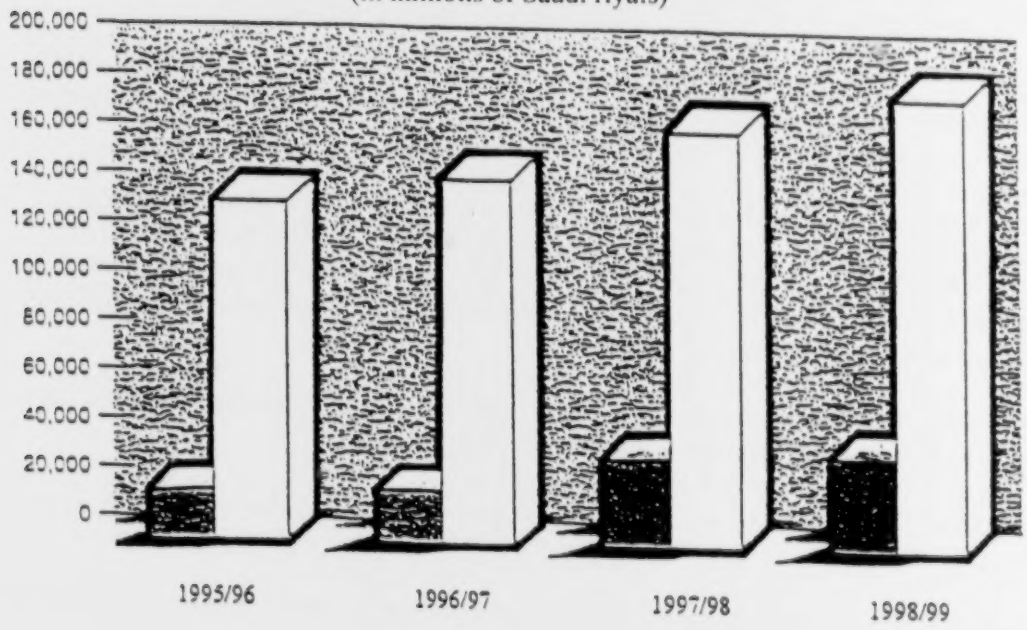
Article 1/1 calls for considerable attention to be paid to the Islamic upbringing of the girl as she is considered to be the nucleus of the Muslim family.

Article 2/2 seeks to reduce failure and drop-out rates by diagnosing the reasons for the low learning achievement of female students, providing them with appropriate assistance and guidance, avoiding repetition of the year as far as possible by exerting additional efforts with such students and considering the possibility of early promotion for outstanding students who can satisfy the promotion requirements.

Article 2/10 advocates ongoing support for nursery and kindergarten programmes with a view to expanding these facilities and increasing their capacity.

Evolution of the total State budgets for education in relation to the Public Budget of the State during the first four years of the the Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000)

(in millions of Saudi riyals)



Fiscal year	State	Education
1995/96	150 000	26 541
1996/97	160 000	27 025
1997/98	181 000	41 264
1998/99	196 000	45 595

Article 2/11 reaffirms the overall concept of ongoing education as a means of self-education.

Article 2/12 emphasizes the need to honour and encourage gifted and outstanding female students in order to ensure that they will continue to excel in the widest possible range of fields.

Article 3/3 advocates the development of school curricula in a manner consistent with the social and cultural needs of female students and with their mental development at all levels of education.

Article 3/4 encourages reading and visits to school and public libraries in order to make students accustomed to educational research and discovery during their leisure time, for which competitions are organized and prizes are awarded.

Article 3/6 aims to extend the contribution of female students to scientific, social and cultural activities.

Article 3/7 advocates the inculcation of health awareness in students, the female teacher being the example to be followed in this respect, and training the student to use means of preventive first aid in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Health.

Article 3/9 states that primary health care should be available to all female students through the provision of health supervisors in all educational districts. In this respect, a study should be conducted to evaluate the primary health care provided for female students by the General Presidency, so that the Ministry of Health can provide such care in places where its services are available.

Article 3/10 lays great emphasis on the formulation of students' counselling and guidance programmes and the establishment of a database in schools.

Article 3/12 stipulates that education opportunities should be available to all girls of primary school age.

Article 4/5 calls for the provision and development of educational, social and recreational facilities for female students.

Article 4/8 advocates the introduction of nursery and kindergarten classes in the schools run by the General Presidency of Girls' Education in order to solve the problem of working mothers, especially those working in educational fields, as required.

Article 8/1 calls for ongoing support for, and improvement of, special education services in keeping with modern trends.

Article 8/2 calls for cooperation with the competent authorities in the field of early diagnosis of disability and health awareness in this connection.

Article 8/4 stipulates that slightly disabled children should attend regular schools while severely disabled children should be directed to specialized institutions.

232. The State is endeavouring to cater for the child's welfare an education in a manner conducive to a decent, secure and happy life. In this respect, the educational policy in the Kingdom is in harmony with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with respect to general principles, civil rights, fundamental freedoms, education, health care and

beneficial use of leisure time. The agencies concerned with educational development in the Kingdom are helping to make these principles and provisions widely known to the public at large and especially to children, and are encouraging society to treat children in accordance with Islamic teachings and the provisions of the Convention.

233. Islam regards the education and rearing of children as an obligation for every Muslim. The Prophet Muhammad was the first teacher. The first Koranic verse revealed to him was: "Proclaim (or read) in the name of thy Lord who created; created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim and thy Lord is most bountiful. He who taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew not."[28] It is said in an Islamic tradition that seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim, male and female.

234. Government appropriations for education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represent not less than 20 per cent of the State's public budget. The following examples show that the educational policy in the Kingdom is consistent with the provisions of the Convention.

5. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

235. Article 8 of the Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stipulates that: "Opportunities shall be available to the student to participate in the development of the community in which he lives."

236. Accordingly, the school curricula in the Kingdom seek to instil good behavioural habits in the younger generation, including healthy behaviour to protect their life, health and safety. The curricula focus on the healthy upbringing of children by explaining the importance of nutrition, healthy diet, senses and ways to protect them from dangers. Children take part in public awareness campaigns, such as Traffic Week, Cleanliness Week, Combating Drugs and AIDS, World Health Day and World No-Tobacco Day.

6. Implemented measures with regard to economic, social and cultural rights (art. 4)

237. The Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to improve the efficiency of the educational process at all stages in order to cater for all children from the pre-school stage to the secondary stage, irrespective of the child's nationality and without discrimination of any kind, through an appropriate dissemination of schools in all rural and urban areas of the Kingdom.

238. The educational success rate in the Kingdom amounted to 84 per cent according to a study conducted in 1993. The State also permits the foreign non-Arabic-speaking communities living within its territory to open schools in coordination with their embassies and provides them with appropriate facilities through the competent authorities.

239. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is in full conformity with article 10 of the Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabic, where all children have the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. Likewise, articles 2 and 70 of the Educational Policy stipulate that the rights of the child must be respected and guaranteed equally in accordance with Islamic law. Moreover, articles 53, 63 and 29 of the Educational Policy

affirm that curricula should keep pace with the characteristics of each phase of the growth of the child in a manner conducive to the promotion of talents and proper spiritual, mental and emotional development.

240. The counselling and guidance departments in Saudi educational institutions seek to discover the individual talents, abilities and aptitudes of students in order to develop them in a manner beneficial to the student and society. To this end, the Ministry of Education has established an independent department to discover and encourage gifted students.

241. Likewise, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is in harmony with the Educational Policy of the Kingdom in the following respects:

Article 32 of the Convention is consistent with the Educational Policy with regard to the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. At all stages of education, the child receives academic and vocational guidance in order to choose the profession appropriate to him or her in the future.

The Educational Policy is in conformity with articles 33 and 34 of the Convention in regard to the adoption of all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and from all forms of sexual exploitation.

The "preliminary week" programme is designed to receive new students and prepare them psychologically for integration in education.

Under the outstanding students' welfare programme, students receive certificates of merit and prizes in cash and in kind.

There is also a programme under which appropriate attention is given to academically retarded students by qualified specialists.

7. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

242. The school curriculum in the Kingdom recognizes the right of the child to express his or her views freely, prepares the child to be bold and self-confident and fosters his or her ability to dialogue and elucidate thoughts and feelings in the following ways:

The art of expression is taught as a subject from the third primary grade in order to enable children to clarify their thoughts in various situations through description, writing letters, attending meetings or participating in various dialogues and debates.

Participation in public radio and television programmes, public newspapers and children's magazines.

Participation in cultural and scientific contests and exhibitions held in sports clubs.

Participation in Social Work Week at the national and regional levels.

The Code of Ethics of the counselling and guidance profession recognizes the right of the child to express his or her views freely, attaches due importance to these views and protects the child from all forms of abuse.

B. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)

243. The State through the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, organizes several cultural, recreational and social programmes and activities for all children free of charge, regardless of their nationalities in a manner consistent with their age, mentality and wishes in order to ensure that they derive optimal benefit from their leisure time.

244. The State earmarks appropriate budgets for student activity programmes at school. In this connection, the State provides food, means of transport, materials, equipment, trainers and supervisors. Moreover, the State has established playgrounds, scout centres, student centres, youth hostels, theatre, exhibition and festival halls, laboratories, workshops and studios. It also awards prizes and organizes competitions appropriate for various categories of children and youth. Children take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these programmes and activities, the most prominent of which are:

Social activities, such as full-day camps; students' trips; Red Crescent, first aid and preservation of the heritage teams; social competitions and summer centres; as well as participation in public awareness programmes such as Tree Week, Traffic Week, Mosque Week, World Health Day, Anti-Drugs and Smoking Week, World Children's Day, summer activity centres, visit exchange programmes, local school activity centres, the weekly activity class for all grades, the Children's Festival, etc. There are 384 such programmes.

Sports activities, including individual and team sports competitions at the national and international levels with a view to implanting a spirit of teamwork and sportsmanship in the minds of children. These school activities take the form of a weekly class, morning physical fitness exercises, the Children's Festival, Sports Day, the School Sports Championships, etc.

Artistic activities. These are designed to promote children's artistic creativity and originality in drawing, painting, decoration and handicrafts. Artistic exhibitions and competitions are organized and children participate in the programme of the Centre for Artistic Talents, the Open Studio, the World in the Eyes of our Children competition and international, Arab and Gulf children's painting competitions.

Cultural activities. Competitions are organized, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, for playwrights who are asked to write plays specifically for children, the winners being awarded prizes. Schools are encouraged to organize theatrical productions and award prizes for outstanding performances. Moreover, annual children's competitions (about 20 per year) in theatrical

arts are held throughout the Kingdom. A total of 150 children's theatrical troupes have been established and theatrical competitions are organized in the summer.

Cultural activities, such as symposia, dialogues with Ministers and senior officials, oratory, literary composition, poetry, journalism and school broadcasting, in addition to the child-oriented activities of the Saudi Association for Culture and the Arts.

Scout activities, such as scout and voluntary work camps (to serve pilgrims) in order to make children accustomed to living outdoors and enable them to participate in development programmes and in evening celebrations. Summer camps, educational excursions and hiking trips are organized, in addition to Cub clubs and badge of merit and handicraft hobby programmes.

Scientific activities. The Scientific Clubs organize scientific innovation competitions to encourage children to take an interest in computer science, geology, biology, physics and other sciences and laboratories.

Cooperation programmes with other Arab and friendly countries in child activities at the GCC, Arab and international levels, such as exchange visits, Cub camps, meetings of school scout leaders and teachers, and children's painting, sports, cultural and scientific competitions.

Literary Club activities, such as the publication of books and the organization of children's cultural dialogues.

Cultural and Sports Club activities. There are 153 sports clubs throughout the Kingdom providing recreational and sports services for children.

Activities of the Saudi Arabian Scout Association. This Association promotes the Scout Movement, coordinates and supervises Cub and Scout troupes, prepares programmes consistent with the abilities and needs of children and participates in international, Arab and Gulf camps.

Scientific research activities, which are specifically designed for children.

Museum activities, which contribute to children's awareness of their heritage and history.

Scientific and technological centres. The State encourages the private sector and governmental institutions to establish children's scientific clubs and centres in order to encourage children to take an interest in science and technology. Competitions are organized in physics, chemistry and computer science to develop children's scientific abilities and talents. The centres include the Wahat Al-Ulum (Science Oasis) Centre at Riyadh and the Science and Technology Centre at Jeddah which are seeking to develop children's perceptive, innovative and mechanical abilities, and stimulate their interest in computers, physics, chemistry and mathematics. Club members have visited the Space Center in the United States of America.

Hobbies development centres at youth hostels in the Kingdom, these promote hobbies such as electronics, geology, photography, energetics, astronomy, etc.

Exhibition activities, such as children's art exhibitions held in the Kingdom and abroad.

Children's recreational centre activities, under the auspices of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, where children can practise all forms of cultural, recreational, sports, artistic and creative activities. The General Presidency of Youth Welfare has issued five licences to the private sector to open children's recreational centres, in addition to its own recreational and sports club programmes, in all parts of the Kingdom.

Mass media activities, which include information activities designed to enable children to participate in broadcasting, acting and the presentation of television programmes; cultural and social magazines which address all matters affecting children's life with special emphasis on solving their problems and furthering their happiness by speedily responding to their wishes and interests and enabling them to exercise their rights in a fair and equitable manner.

Family recreation, through family parks which are equipped with all conveniences, including water, electricity, playgrounds, shady areas, etc.

Cultural association activities, including social, cultural and artistic activities and heritage research.

Social welfare centres.

Private charitable associations, which organize fairs for children and their families.

Public and children's libraries.

Annual festivals, such as the Janaderiya Festival and the end-of-year festival of the Departments of Education.

Recreational programmes, which are comprehensive insofar as they cover all villages, hamlets and towns on equal terms.

Local and international cultural, social and sports activities for the disabled.

Recreation centres run by private-sector companies and institutions where children and families have access to electronic and computer games, in addition to centres where electronic, computer and other children's games can be bought.

PART EIGHT. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

A. Children in situations of emergency

245. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opposes wars, seeks to achieve a just peace among all peoples and strives to realize the aspirations of the Arab and Muslim nation with regard to solidarity and unity while enhancing its relations with friendly States. Likewise, it protects human rights in accordance with Islamic law, guarantees the rights of its citizens and their families in an emergency, ensures the security of all its citizens and foreign residents in its territory and protects the Islamic faith, the two Holy Mosques, society and the homeland.[29]

246. Furthermore, the Kingdom opposes the displacement of children due to wars, devotes tireless efforts to the achievement of peace among peoples and endorses the principle of the ba on trade in weapons of mass destruction, including atomic, biological and chemical weapons. The Kingdom has hosted children, who were forced to leave their countries due to wars and ha provided them with comprehensive care. It is also helping to relieve the suffering of victims o wars and disasters through financial aid and contributions in kind, including food and clothing. This is evident from its contributions to the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Sudan, Somalia and Lebanon. Article 42 of the Basic System of Government permits the granting of political asylum if required by the public interest. During the Gulf war, the State provided displaced persons with appropriate aid. The State has also established a General Directorate fo Civil Defence, affiliated to the Ministry of the Interior, for the protection of individuals and society in case of emergency.

1. Children in armed conflicts (art. 38)

247. The regulations applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia make provision for the protection of women and children in an emergency, strictly prohibit shelling and bombardmen of civilian populations in order to preserve their lives and also ban the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons during military operations in accordance with the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The State condemns all forms of oppression an cruel or inhuman treatment of children and women. It also guarantees the rights of its citizens and their families in an emergency or in the event of sickness, disability or old age and prohibi the recruitment of any person under the age of 18 into the armed forces.

B. Children in conflict with the law

1. The administration of juvenile justice (art. 40)

248. Reference has already been made to the procedures of juvenile justice applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where juvenile courts hold their hearings in social surveillance centres under the supervision of judges specialized in juvenile matters and aware of the menta of juveniles, who are questioned without any pressure and in the presence of a social worker.

249. The fundamental judicial principle is that a person is presumed innocent until proved guilty according to the law. Every preventive measure must be taken for the benefit of the juvenile delinquent, including guidance, counselling and reprimand without prejudice to the

juvenile's sense of dignity. Every attempt must be made to avoid the need to remand a juvenile in custody and to deliver him into the custody of his family, subject to a pledge of better upbringing, provided that the consequences of the offence are not grave. It should be noted that Islamic law never imposes capital punishment on children. Moreover, no previous conviction is entered in the juvenile's record, regardless of the number of times he has offended. These measures safeguard the best interests of the child, even in judicial proceedings.

250. Social surveillance centres cater for the welfare of their juvenile inmates, including nutrition, clothing, educational and health services, sports, cultural and recreational activities. Moreover, they ensure that a juvenile is not isolated from social life.

2. Children deprived of their liberty, including any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment (art. 37 (b), (c) and (d))

251. The Juvenile Justice Regulations of 1969 and the Decree of 1975 take into account the best interests of the child as the fundamental principles in juvenile justice are fairness and judiciousness. The State has established special courts for juvenile delinquents with competent judges helped by social workers. The legal proceedings are conducted in social surveillance centres, in an atmosphere of calm and tranquillity in which the juvenile is never subjected to any form of pressure or intimidation.

252. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acceded to the convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1984, pursuant to Decree No. M/11 of 7 August 1997. The social surveillance centres ensure the comprehensive welfare of children remanded in custody and provide all the services needed to enable them to lead a normal life, since a juvenile delinquent is a victim of special social or psychological circumstances and is not a criminal by nature. These centres assume responsibility for the juvenile's upbringing and the development of his talents and abilities in an appropriate atmosphere, conducive to devotion to his religion, homeland, culture and society and consistent with his sports, cultural inclinations and hobbies with a view to ensuring their reform and reintegration in society in the public interest.

3. The sentencing of juveniles, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a))

253. The Detention and Imprisonment Regulations, promulgated in Royal Decree No. M/31 of 1977, prohibit the subjection of any person to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (articles 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 28). Likewise, the Juvenile Justice and Social Surveillance Centre Regulations require good treatment of juveniles remanded in custody, including comprehensive health, social, educational and cultural welfare, nutrition, clothing and means of recreation and the right to practise sports and participate in competitions. The Regulations strictly prohibit the handcuffing or cruel treatment of juveniles or the remand in custody of children below the age of seven. They can be transported only in ordinary vehicles and capital punishment cannot be imposed on children who have not attained the age of majority in accordance with Islamic law.

4. Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

254. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provides, in association with many charitable associations and institutions, several humanitarian and health-care activities and programmes for juvenile delinquents, disabled children and their families, who enjoy full social welfare within the framework of carefully planned reform and rehabilitation programmes supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in collaboration with charitable associations and some government agencies, such as the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the General Presidency of Girls' Education, universities, the General Directorate to Combat the Use of Narcotic Drugs, etc. The State has also established a Social Security Department with its own regulations and budget.

255. The purpose of the social surveillance centres, as mentioned above, is to cater for the psychological, social, educational and cultural welfare, rehabilitation, training and social reintegration of juvenile delinquents under the supervision of highly trained and qualified specialists. They also endeavour to settle juvenile cases, without recourse to custody or detention, by providing counselling, guidance and financial and other assistance to enable parents or guardians to care for juveniles in a family environment.

256. Many incentives are offered to encourage juveniles to put an end to their remand in custody. In this respect, the judge may release a juvenile if he is convinced that the juvenile's conduct has improved or if he has memorized the Holy Koran.

257. The social surveillance centres also endeavour to rehabilitate children who have been subjected to any form of cruel or inhuman treatment through medical treatment or psychological and social rehabilitation.

C. Children in situations of exploitation

1. Economic exploitation, including child labour (art. 32)

258. We have already referred to the position of the Basic System of Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on economic exploitation. In this respect, articles 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the Basic System of Government stipulate that: "The Kingdom's economy is free. The State shall guarantee the freedom and inviolability of private property. Private property shall not be expropriated except in the public interest and subject to fair compensation. Confiscation of collective property shall be prohibited. Fees shall be imposed only on an equitable basis and when the need arises. Zakat (alms tax) shall be levied and disbursed for its legally specified purposes. The State shall endeavour to achieve economic and social development in accordance with a methodical and carefully studied plan.

259. Moreover, the Labour Code prohibits the employment of children under 13 years of age and restricts the working hours of children to six hours per day, during which a rest period must be granted. Children are not allowed to work for more than five consecutive hours, at night or heavy or hazardous work.

260. The Code further stipulates that work is optional and not compulsory for children. It recognizes the right of the child to be protected from performing any work that is likely to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. It also prescribes a severe penalty for anyone who employs a child under the age of thirteen. The Civil Service Regulations likewise specify a minimum age (18 years) for admission to employment.

2. Illicit use of narcotic drugs (art. 33)

261. The State has taken all appropriate measures to combat drugs and psychotropic substances, including trafficking, illicit use and production. Drug traffickers and smugglers may face capital punishment. There are also various penalties for persons who are caught in the act of possessing, buying, producing or processing narcotic drugs or substances for their personal use or with a view to trafficking therein.

262. The State is making considerable efforts to combat narcotic drugs and has acceded to several international conventions, including the Arab Anti-Drug Convention. The State offers every means of treatment and rehabilitation to addicts and provides counselling, guidance and comprehensive information concerning the dangers of narcotic drugs and means of prevention and treatment.

263. The State is implementing a number of prevention and public awareness programmes and any person who contacts the police asking for help or treatment is exempted from punishment and provided with every means of treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

3. Children and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)

264. The State prohibits all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual assault on children and imposes appropriate penalties, in accordance with Islamic law, on persons who engage in sexual exploitation. It provides children with care, guidance and Islamic enlightenment through schools, the mass media, educational activities, clubs, associations, etc., and encourages them to behave in a proper manner.

4. Sale, trafficking, abduction and other forms of exploitation (arts. 34, 35 and 36)

265. The laws applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prohibit the abduction or sale of, or trafficking in, children and takes appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of exploitation and assault. The State is endeavouring to ensure good treatment, prevent humiliation and safeguard the dignity of all members of society. Any person who abducts, trafficks in or abuses children is prosecuted in accordance with the penal provisions of Islamic law. The State provides comprehensive care for the younger generation, who represent the cornerstone on which the State is based and a guarantee of the future to which it aspires. Pursuant to articles 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Basic System of Government, the State is taking great pains to strengthen the bonds which hold the family together in order to ensure the happiness of its members and promote social unity. The State applies Islamic Law in all fields in order to ensure a decent life for all members of society. Islam prohibits injustice, murder, debauchery, libertinism and all forms of prostitution and indicates the best way to deal with the

perpetrators of such crimes, as well as the means of guidance. It provides full guidance and protection for minor children and guarantees their welfare, proper treatment and rights. The State protects human rights in accordance with article 26 of the Basic System of Government. It has established schools, hospitals, universities, nurseries and social welfare institutions. It has also promulgated regulations, guaranteed rights and endorsed all international efforts to preserve human dignity, ensure justice and equality and prohibit inhuman practices.

D. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)

266. There are no minorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All Saudi citizens are equally treated without distinction of any kind, as they are an integral part of the Kingdom, held together by the bonds of mutual affection and love resulting from Islamic teachings. They constitute a homogeneous society with a common culture, religion, language and loyalty to the homeland and the nation. Foreigners living in the Kingdom's territory enjoy the same welfare and protection as Saudi citizens, their children have the same rights as Saudi children and they are all equal before the law.

CONCLUSION

267. The preparation of this report provided an opportunity to review many topics relevant to child welfare in the Kingdom. The committee responsible for preparing this report encountered some difficulties in collecting and integrating some overlapping information.

268. In this respect, the committee has made the following recommendations in order to avoid duplication and facilitate the future reporting process.

A. Future plans

1. The activities of the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare should be developed through regular meetings of its Supreme Council and its Planning and Follow-Up Committee in order to consider the reports of the agencies concerned with child welfare in the Kingdom, make appropriate recommendations thereon and enhance the coordination and monitoring of the various efforts.

2. A general strategy should be formulated for child welfare in the Kingdom to which all the authorities concerned, as well as the private sector, should adhere.

3. A consolidated guide, clarifying all the regulations, measures and instructions relevant to child welfare in the Kingdom, should be compiled.

4. A data bank on child welfare in the Kingdom should be established, with an

5. All the authorities concerned should be requested to prepare biannual reports on the services they render to children in accordance with specific indicators, with special emphasis on the appropriate evaluation criteria applied to measure the achievement of their objectives.

6. Seminars and scientific and media meetings should be held to further the objectives pursued by the Saudi National Commission for Child Welfare and the Kingdom's child welfare strategy.

7. There is a need to formulate criteria reflecting the extent to which children receive the care that they need in a manner consistent with their health, and their social, cultural and political situation.

8. Writers and authors should be encouraged to write didactic children's stories that focus on the need to respect children's interests and rights.

9. Public awareness of the rights of the child should be promoted among families and agencies concerned with child welfare.

B. Method of evaluating activities for the benefit of children

1. Having formulated the general strategy for child welfare, as well as appropriate criteria to assess the achievement of the objectives of that strategy, and having collected data and statistics, the Supreme Council for Childhood will assign a competent body to monitor and compare the statistics with the planned objectives so that the Supreme Council can review the strategy's order of priorities and prepare short- and long-term plans in coordination with the competent authorities.

2. Cooperation with regional and international organizations concerned with child services should be strengthened for their mutual benefit and in the interests of children.

C. Periodic reports

1. Each authority concerned with child welfare in the Kingdom should prepare a biannual report for submission to the Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Childhood. The report should describe the service s rendered to children, and the results achieved thereby, within the authority's field of competence and their relevance to the general strategy for child welfare.

2. Reports, results and statistics should be collected, classified and compared with their predecessors by the Secretariat of the Supreme Council and entered in its data

4. Information relevant to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be extracted for purposes of follow-up on reports and inquiries from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the child concerning the periodic reports on the measures taken to implement the Convention.

5. These reports and information should be used to monitor the implementation of the general strategy for child welfare in the Kingdom, as well as any recent developments, and to reply to correspondence received by the Secretariat of the Saudi National Commission concerning child-related statistics in the Kingdom.

May God bless our efforts

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The Information Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Notes

[1] Holy Koran Israa: 70.

[2] Ibid., Tin: 4.

[3] Ibid., Ma'ida: 9.

[4] Ibid., Israa: 15.

[5] Ibid., Hujurat: 6.

[6] Ibid., Israa: 15.

[7] Holy Koran, Hujurat: 13.

[8] Holy Koran, Al-Nahl: 90.

[9] Holy Koran: Ma'ida: 9.

[10] Ibid., An'am: 164.

[11] Holy Koran: Maryam: 7.

[12] Ibid., Kahf: 46.

[13] Holy Koran: An'am: 98.

[14] Ibid., Rum: 21.

[15] Ibid., Ahqaf: 15.

[16] Ibid., Luqman: 14.

[17] Ibid., Baqara: 228.

[18] Holy Koran: An'am: 151.

[19] Holy Koran: An'am: 151.

[20] Ibid., Baqara: 30.

[24] Ibid., Luqman: 14.

[25] Holy Koran: Insan: 2.

[26] Ibid., An'am 161.

[27] Ibid., Baqara: 30.

[28] Holy Koran: Alaq: 1-5.

[29] (See articles 24, 25, 26, 27, 33 and 34 of the Basic System of Government.)